AN

ACCOUNT

OF AN

EMBASSY

TO THE

KINGDOM OF AVA.

A NEW EDITION.

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OF AN

EMBASSY

TO

THE KINGDOM OF AVA,

SENT BY THE

GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA,

IN THE YEAR 1795.

By MICHAEL SYMES, Esq.

Lieut.-Col. in His Majesty's 76th Regiment.

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CHAPTER III.

Consent to go to Pegue before the return of Mr. Wood.—Suspicions of the Birmans awakened by designing Persons.—Hospitable Reception experienced by Foreign Merchants at Rangoon—Characters of Men in Office—Arts used to counteract the English Deputation.—Mr. Wood departs from Rangoon—Politeness of the Raywoon.—

Embark for Pegue—bring to during the Ebb of Tide—Appearance of the Country—find the Remains of two Deer, half devoured by Tygers.—Rich Soil—Country destitute of Population, and infested by wild Beasts.

AT the earnest solicitation of Baba-Sheen, I consented to embark for Pegue on the 31st of March, and not wait the return of Mr. Wood, as I had at first intended. The annual festival at the great temple of Pegue was about to be celebrated with sumptuous magnificence; and the Viceroy had expressed a particular desire that the English gentlemen should witness the rejoicings. I told Baba-Sheen that I would relinquish my original determination on this point, as a mark of my confidence in him, and perfect conviction of the friendly inclinations of the Viceroy.

Previous to this amicable termination of a disagreement which at first bore an inauspicious appearance, I had conjectured what were the real motives of their distrust, and my conclusions afterwards proved to be rightly founded. Pride, the natural characteristic of the Birmans, was inflamed by the arts of designing men, and suspicion was awakened by misrepresentation. The Birmans, sensible of the advantages of commerce, but inexpert in the practice, desirous to improve, but unacquainted with the principles of trade, had of late years given toleration to all sects, and invited strangers of every nation to resort to their ports; and being themselves free from those prejudices of cast, which shackle their Indian neighbours, they permitted foreigners to intermarry and settle amongst them. But their country had been so much ha-

rassed by wars with neighbouring nations, and torn by revolts and domestic dissensions, that trade was frequently interrupted, and sometimes entirely stopped; property was rendered insecure, and even the personal safety of settlers endangered. During the short intervals of tranquillity, obscure adventurers, and outcasts from all countries of the east, had flocked to Rangoon, where they were received with hospitality by a liberal nation: among these the industrious few soon acquired wealth by means of their superior knowledge. The Parsees, the Armenians, and a small proportion of Mussulmen, engrossed the largest share of the trade of Rangoon; and individuals from their number were frequently selected by government to fill employments of trust that related to trade and transactions with foreigners, the duties of which the Birmans

supposed that such persons could perform better than themselves. Baba-Sheen, born in the Birman country, of Armenian parents, had obtained the high office he held by his skill in business and his general knowledge. The descendant of a Portuguese family, named Jaunsee, whose origin was very low, and who in the early part of his life had been accused as accessary to the piratical seizure of an English vessel, was invested with the important office of Shawbunder, or intendant of the port, and receiver of the port customs. This man appeared to perform the duties of his station with diligence. The town of Rangoon was indebted to his activity for the pavement of its streets, for several well built wooden bridges, and a wharf, which, extending into the river, and raised on posts, enabled the ships to deliver and receive cargoes with-

out the assistance of river craft: under his direction also, a spacious custom house had lately been erected. This is the only lay building in Rangoon that is not constructed of wood; it is composed of brick and mortar, and the roof covered with tiles; within, there are a number of wooden stages for the reception of bale goods. Notwithstanding the respect which the energy of Jaunsee's character had obtained, the Birmans were by no means insensible of the meanness of his extraction: his want of education was a matter of derision among them: although an inhabitant of the Birman country near forty years, and a great part of the time an officer of government, he could neither read nor write, and even spoke their language imperfectly. We were unfortunate in his happening to be at Ava at the time of our arrival, whither

he had gone to render up his annual accounts: had he been on the spot, it is probable he would have obviated several of the inconvenient circumstances attending our first introduction.

The character of Baba-Sheen was strikingly contrasted with that of the Shawbunder; he was a man of general knowledge, and deemed by the Birmans an accomplished scholar; he was better acquainted with the history, politics, and geography of Europe, than any Asiatic I ever conversed with: his learning was universal, being slightly versed in almost every science; but his information, extensive as it was, although it gained him employment, could not procure him confidence: he was said to be deficient in other essential requisites.

Several private merchants had also acquired influence in Rangoon. Bawangee, a Parsee of considerable credit, had interest to procure a partial mitigation of duties on his merchandize, in consideration of supplying annually a certain number of firelocks for the royal arsenal. Jacob Aguizar, an Armenian, to whom I had letters of credit, dealt largely in foreign commodities. These people naturally behold with a jealous eye, any advance of a commercial nature, that may tend to diminish their influence, and deprive them of that dictatorial power, which they assume and exercise over all merchants and mariners that resort to Rangoon: but of none are they so apprehensive as of the English; a connection with whom might teach the Birmans to transact foreign business without their assistance, and give them a more adequate sense of their own

interests. Under these fears they had long been disseminating the seeds of suspicion, and warning the Birmans to be on their guard against British fraud, as well as British force; but no sooner did they hear of the present deputation, than the alarm bell was sounded from all quarters. They represented (as I was credibly informed) our designs to be of the most mischievous tendency; and even endeavoured to work on the superstition of the people, by the solemn promulgation of a prophecy, that in less than twelve months the English colours would fly on the Rangoon flag-staff. These artifices, which were not now practised for the first time, although they could not deceive the Birmans, it is probable were not altogether void of effect; nor is it to be wondered at, that our reception, though respectful from the deputation that came down to

meet us, was not perfectly cordial. There is also reason to conclude, that the provincial officers of Rangoon knew not in what manner they ought to act, not having received precise instructions for the regulation of their conduct toward us in matters of ceremony.

Conformably to our recent arrangement, Mr. Wood left us on the preceding night, and, accompanied by Baba-Sheen, set out for Pegue in a commodious boat, well protected from the weather. This day the captains of the principal ships in the river dined with me on shore. The Raywoon, knowing that I was to have company, sent a whole antelope, with Indian vegetables in abundance; and acquainted me, that boats would be in readiness for us on the following day at noon, as I had pro-

mised to leave Rangoon by the evening's tide.

The morning of the following day was spent in preparation for our journey to Pegue. Having now come to a right understanding with persons in power, I did not scruple to send on shore part of my heavy baggage, which was deposited in the house, under charge of three soldiers, and some servants, whom we were obliged to leave behind on account of indisposition. The presents for his Majesty were not taken out of the ship, as many of the articles were of a brittle nature, and liable to injury from removal. I likewise drew up a short letter of instructions for Captain Thomas, leaving him in most cases a latitude to act from the dictates of his own discretion, on which I knew I might with safety rely; at the same time

I pointed out the propriety of using every means to conciliate the inhabitants, and cautioned him to repress, in his European crew, that thoughtless intemperance which is the characteristic of British seamen when they get on shore.

About noon, three boats were in readiness at the creek near our dwelling. The one designed for my conveyance was comfortable, according to Birman notions of accommodation. It consisted of three small compartments, partitioned by fine mats, neatly fastened to slips of bamboo cane: the inner room was lined with Indian chintz; the ròof, however, was so low as not to admit of a person standing upright; an inconvenience scarcely to be endured by an European, but not at all regarded by Asiatics. It was rowed by twelve Birman watermen, who used short

oars made in the English form, and who seemed to understand their business. A large heavy boat was provided for the soldiers and our domestics, and a small cutter attended as a kitchen: the boat destined for Dr. Buchanan did not arrive until it was dark, and being a very indifferent one we imagined it was kept out of sight for that reason.

The mouth of the Syriam or Pegue river, where it joins with that of Rangoon, is about three miles below the town; we therefore waited till the ebb tide was nearly spent, in order to drop down, and take the first of the flood to ascend the river of Pegue. At eight o'clock at night we embarked, accompanied by two war-boats, in one of which was the Nakhaan of Rangoon, and in the other an inferior officer. A black Portuguese in the ser-

vice of the provincial government, who spoke the language of Hindostan, came as official interpreter: we had likewise another Portugueze, named Pauntchoo, who engaged in my service at the Andaman island, whither he had come from Bassien, as a trader in tobacco and small articles for the supply of the colony. This man was a valuable acquisition to me during the mission; he spoke the Birman language fluently, and that of Hindostan intelligibly: the latter was the medium I commonly used in my conversations with Birmans, and I was seldom at a loss to find some person that understood it. On arriving at the mouth of the Pegue river, we brought to, and waited an hour for the turn of tide, which, during the springs, runs with considerable violence. On the first of the flood, we weighed, and used our oars: neap tides prevailing, the boats

made but slow progress, about four miles an hour, continuing at that rate for seven hours, when we again stopped and fastened our boats to the bank.

Early in the morning Dr. Buchanan and myself walked out with our guns, accompanied by half a dozen attendants; the country round, as far as our view could reach, displayed a level plain, with clumps of trees at distant intervals; a thick reedy grass had grown in some places very high; in others, where it had been burnt, there appeared good pasturage for cattle: we saw the embanked divisions of a few rice plantations, and discovered the vestiges of former culture and population; but during a walk of two hours the eye was not gratified with the sight of a house, or an inhabitant: desolated by the contentions of the Birmans and Peguers, the country had

not yet recovered from the ravages of war. In our walk we observed many tracks of wild elephants, the spots where hogs had rooted, and deer lain, and found the remains of two antelopes that had recently been killed and half devoured by tygers. The Doctor and myself fired at deer without success. The banks on each side the river are low, and the land seems adapted to produce excellent crops; but it is now quite deserted, and become the undisputed domain of the wild beasts of the forest.

CHAPTER IV.

Arrive at Pegue—polite Reception—invited to the Celebration of the Annual Festival—Procession described.—Sports in honour of the Day—Pugilistic Exercises—Birmans expert at Wrestling.—Formal Introduction to the Maywoon, or Viceroy.—Companies from the different Districts of the Province pass in review.—Grand Display of Fire-works—orderly and sober Demeanour of the Populace.—Curiosity of the Birmans.—Attention of the Viceroy to our Accommodation.—Invited to a Dramatic Representation.—Siamese Actors—an extraordinary Performer—Description of the Play.—Birmans close the Year with a purificatory Ceremonial, in which the English Gentlemen bear a part.

At noon we got under way, and soon passed a village on the right, consisting of about twenty houses; the river gradually

diminished in breadth, and at this place was not more than forty yards wide, the banks covered with coppice and long reeds: after passing another and larger village where there was a chokey or watch-house, we proceeded through a cultivated country, and numerous villages appeared on each side. At seven in the evening we were in sight of Pegue, and judged the distance by water from Ràngoon to be about ninety miles, most part of the way in a northward direction; but the windings of the river are so great, that the road in a straight line must be much less. When we approached the landing-place, Mr. Wood came down to meet us, and the favourable account he gave of his reception, added not a little to the satisfaction of having finished our journey: we also found Baba-Sheen on the bank waiting our arrival. This personage con-

ducted us with great civility to our habitation, which we were pleased at finding far superior to that we had left. It was situated on a plain, a few hundred yards without the principal gate of the present town, but within the fortified lines of the ancient city. Like Birman houses in general, it was raised between three and four feet from the ground, composed wholly of bamboos and mats, and indifferently thatched: this is a defect that extends universally to their own dwellings, and affords matter of surprise in a country where the coarse grass used for thatching is so plentiful. We had each a small apartment as a bed-chamber, with carpets spread over the mats, and a larger room to dine in and to receive visitors: huts were also erected for our attendants; and a bamboo palisade, inclosing a court sufficiently spacious, surrounded the whole.

On the whole, we had reason to be satisfied with our dwelling; it was commodious, according to the ideas of the people themselves, and we had no right to complain of that which was well intended. Shortly after our arrival, two officers of government waited on me, with compliments of congratulation from the Maywoon; they stayed but a short time, perceiving that we were busy in arranging conveniences for the night.

Our servants were occupied during the greater part of the next day in bringing up our baggage from the boats to the house, a distance of nearly half a mile. In the afternoon an officer called Che-Key, second in rank to the Maywoon, and the Sere-dogee, or secretary of the provincial government, accompanied by Baba-Sheen, paid us a visit to tea. They

informed me, that the Maywoon, or Viceroy, who had been much engaged in directing the preparations for the ensuing festival, hoped that we would wave ceremony, and give him our company on the following morning at the great temple of Shoemadoo, to view the amusements of the first day; an invitation that I gladly accepted, from motives of curiosity as well as of respect.

At eight o'clock in the morning Baba-Sheen arrived, in order to conduct us to the temple; and brought with him three small horses, equipped with saddles and bridles, resembling those used by the higher ranks of the inhabitants of Hindostan. After breakfast, Mr. Wood, Doctor Buchanan, and myself, mounted, and attended by Baba-Sheen, and an Ackedoo, an officer belonging to the Maywoon's household,

also on horseback, set out to view the ceremony. We entered the new town by the nearest gate, and proceeded upwards of a quarter of a mile through the principal street till we came to where it was crossed at right angles by another, which led from the Maywoon's residence to the temple: here our progress was stopped by a great concourse of people, and we perceived on each side of the way troops marching by single files, in slow time, towards the temple. By the advice of Ba-ba-Sheen, we occupied a convenient spot to view the procession. The troops that we saw were the Maywoon's guard; five or six hundred men passed us in this manner, wretchedly armed and equipped; many had muskets that appeared in a very unserviceable state, with accoutrements not in a more respectable condition; some were provided with spears, others with

sabres; whilst their dress was as motley as their weapons. Several were naked to the middle, having only a Kummerband, or waistcloth, rolled round their waist, and passed between their legs; some were dressed in old velvet or cloth coats, which they put on regardless of size or fashion, although it scarcely covered their nakedness, or trailed on the ground: it was finery, and finery in any shape was welcome. Some wore Dutch broad-brimmed hats bound with gold lace, others the crowns of hats without any brim at all: the officers of this martial band, who were for the most part Christian descendants of Portugueze ancestors, exhibited a very grotesque appearance. The first personages of rank that passed by were three children of the Maywoon, borne astride upon men's shoulders; the eldest, a boy about eight years of age; the youngest, a

girl not more than five; the latter only was legitimate, being the first born of his present wife; the two elder were the offspring of concubines. The Maywoon followed at a short distance, mounted on the neck of a very fine elephant, which he guided himself. His dress was handsome and becoming; he had on a dark velvet robe with long sleeves, trimmed with broad gold lace, and on his head he wore a conical cap of the same material, richly embroidered; a number of parade elephants in tawdry housings brought up the rear. As we had not been formally introduced, he passed by without honouring us with any notice. Proceeding to the foot of the steps that lead to the pagoda, his elephant knelt down to suffer him to alight. Whilst he was in the performance of this act, the parade elephants knelt also, and the crowd that followed

squatted on their heels. Having ascended the flight of steps, he put off his shoes, and walked once round the temple without his umbrella, which was laid aside out of reverence to the sanctity of the place. When he had finished this ceremony, he proceeded to the scene of amusement, a sort of theatre erected at an angle of the area of the temple. Two saloons, or open halls, separate from the great building, formed two sides of the theatre, which was about fifty feet square, covered by an awning of grass, spread on a flat roof of slender canes, supported by bamboo poles. Beneath the projecting verge of the roof of one of the saloons, there was an elevated seat, with a handsome canopy of cloth, for the accommodation of the Maywoon and his three children; and on a bare bench beneath him sat the principal officers of his court. On the left side of

the theatre, a similar canopy and chair were erected for the Maywoon of Martaban, who happened at this time to be passing by to take possession of his government. Opposite to him, under the roof of the other saloon, seats were provided for the English gentlemen, covered with fine carpeting, but without any canopy. The diversions of this day consisted entirely of boxing and wrestling. In order to prevent injury to the champions, the ground had been prepared, and made soft with moistened sand. At the latter exercise they seemed to be very expert: a short stout man was particularly distinguished for his superior skill and strength; we were told, that in former contests he had killed two of his antagonists. The first that encountered him on the present occasion, though much superior in size, was, after a short strug-

gle, pitched on his head, and, as the bystanders said, severely hurt. Many others displayed great activity and address; but in the art of boxing they seemed very deficient, notwithstanding they used fists, knees, and elbows. The battles were of short duration; blood drawn on either side terminated the contest; and even without it, the Maywoon would not suffer them to contend long. At the end of an engagement both combatants approached the Maywoon's throne, and prostrated themselves before him, with their foreheads to the ground, whilst an attendant spread on the shoulders of each two pieces of cotton cloth, as the reward of their exertions, which they carried away in a crouching position, until they mingled with the crowd. The places of those who retired were immediately filled by fresh pugilists.

This amusement lasted for three hours, until we became quite weary of it; tea and sweetmeats in great profusion were afterwards served to us, in the name of the Maywoon. We departed without ceremony, and got home about four o'clock, extremely oppressed by the intense heat of the weather.

In the morning an early message came from the Maywoon, intimating that he hoped to see us that day at the government-house. Baba-Sheen also made a tender of his services to introduce us to the Praw, or lord; who being ready at the hour appointed, we set out on horseback to pay our visit of ceremony, preceded by the soldiers of the guard, and our personal attendants. Six Birmans also walked in front, bearing the articles intended as a present, which consisted of

silks, satins, velvets, gold, flowered and plain muslins, some broad cloth, and a handsome silver-mounted fowling piece. In this order we marched through the town, the objects of universal curiosity, till we reached the gate of an inclosure surrounding the Maywoon's dwelling. It was made of boards nailed to posts twelve or thirteen feet high, and comprehended a spacious square, in the centre of which stood the governor's residence. There were likewise some smaller houses irregularly disposed, appropriated, as we understood, to the several members of the Maywoon's family. We pulled off our shoes at the bottom of the stairs, and were ushered into a saloon, from whence, turning to the right, we ascended three steps into a hall, where a number of persons, ranged on each side, were sitting with their legs inverted, waiting the entrance

of the Maywoon. Instructed by Baba-Sheen, we took our seats on small carpets spread in the middle of the room, in front of a narrow gallery elevated about two feet from the floor and railed in, with the presents placed before us on trays. In a few minutes the Maywoon entered by a door at one end of the gallery. We made no obeisance, as none was desired, but his attendants crouched to the ground. He sat down, and silence was kept for some time, which I first interrupted, by telling him, through Baba-Sheen, that the Governor-General of India, having received his friendly letter, and being well assured of the amicable disposition of the Birman government towards the English nation, had charged me with the delivery of letters and presents to his Majesty at Ava, and had likewise requested his acceptance of a few articles which I had

brought with me. I then rose, and presented the Governor-General's letter; he laid it on the tray before him, talked of indifferent matters, and was extremely polite in his expressions and manner, but carefully avoided all discourse that had the least relation to business, or the objects of the embassy. After half an hour's conversation, chiefly on uninteresting topics, he invited us to a grand display of fireworks, which was to take place on the following day, and soon after withdrew unceremoniously: tea and sweatmeats were then served up. Having tasted of what was set before us, we were conducted by Baba-Sheen to the outer balcony, to view the different companies pass by that intended to exhibit fireworks on the following day.

It is the custom, on this occasion, for

the several Mious or districts, whose situation is not too remote, to select and send a number of men and women from their community to represent them at the general festival: these companies vie with each other in the magnificence of their fireworks, and on the eve of celebration pass the government-house in review before the Maywoon and his family, each company distinct. A small waggon, drawn by four buffaloes, profusely decorated with peacocks' feathers, and the tails of Thibet cows, led the procession, on which were laid the fireworks of that particular company: next advanced the men belonging to it, dancing and shouting; the females, in a separate troop, came last, singing in full chorus, and clapping their hands in accurately measured time. They, for the most part, appeared to be girls from sixteen to

twenty years of age, comely, and well made; but their features were without the delicacy of the damsels of Hindostan, or the bloom of the soft Circassian beauties. In every company of young women, there were a few aged matrons, probably as a check on the vivacity of youth; the seniors, however, seemed to join in the festivity with juvenile sprightliness. Refreshments were again served up to us, and we returned home about two o'clock.

At eight in the morning great crowds had assembled on the plain without the stockade of the present town, but within the walls of ancient Pegue; three temporary sheds were erected on the middle of the green, apart from each other, one for the reception of the Maywoon and his family, another for the Martaban governor, and a third for our accommodation.

Common spectators, to the number of many thousands, were scattered in groups over the plain; each division or company exhibited in turn its own fireworks: the display of rockets was strikingly grand, but nothing else merited attention. The cylinders of the rockets were trunks of trees hollowed, many of them seven or eight feet long, and from two to three feet in circumference; these were bound by strong ligatures to thick bamboos, eighteen or twenty feet in length; they rose to a great height, and in descending emitted various appearances of fire that were very beautiful. The time appointed for the amusement considerably diminished the effect; but it was chosen from a humane apprehension of injury to the people by the fall of extinguished rockets, which must have rendered the diversion, during the night, extremely dangerous.

Notwithstanding this precaution, a man was unfortunate enough to be in the way of one that killed him on the spot. Each company, after contributing its share towards the general entertainment, marched past the Maywoon, to the sound of musical instruments; after which they proceeded to our shed with songs and dances, "the pipe and the tabor," manifesting every lively demonstration of joy.

It was a spectacle not less pleasing than novel to an European, to witness such a concourse of people of all classes, brought together for the purposes of hilarity and sport, without their committing one act of intemperance, or being disgraced by a single instance of intoxication. What scenes of riot and debauchery would not a similar festival in the vicinity of any capital town of Great Britain inevitably

produce! The reflection is humiliating to an Englishman, however proud he may feel of the national character.

During the four following days we enjoyed a respite from public shows and ceremonials, and had leisure for observation; though our hall, in a morning, was generally crowded, as every person of distinction in Pegue paid me the compliment of a visit, except the Maywoon, who, within the precincts of his own government, where he represents the King, never returns a visit. Numbers both of men and women, prompted by harmless curiosity, surrounded the paling of the inclosure from morning till night; those of a better class usually came in, some previously asking permission, but many entered without it. Perfectly free from restraint among themselves, the Birmans

scruple not to go into your house without ceremony, although you are an utter stranger. To do them justice, however, they are not at all displeased at your taking the same freedom with them. This intrusion is confined wholly to your public room; they do not attempt to open a door: and where a curtain dropped denotes privacy, they never offer to violate the barrier. On entering the room they immediately descend into the posture of respect. Of all our customs none seemed to surprise them more than the preparations for dining: the variety of utensils, and our manner of sitting at a table, excited their wonder: they never took any greater liberty than merely to come into the room, and sit down on the floor; they meddled with nothing, and asked for nothing, and when desired to go away always obeyed with cheerfulness. Had

untold gold been placed before them, I am confident not a piece would have been purloined. Among the men of rank that visited us, an officer called Seree Dogee favoured us with his company more frequently than the rest. He held, by commission from the King, the place of chief provincial secretary, and junior judge of the criminal court: this gentleman often partook of our dinner, and seemed to relish our fare, but could not be prevailed on to taste wine or strong liquors: he was much pleased, however, with the English mode of making tea, of which he drank copiously; indeed it is a beverage highly palatable to all ranks of Birmans.

Although, from the established forms of diplomatic etiquette, we had little personal intercourse with the Maywoon, yet he was not deficient in attention: he sent

large supplies of rice, oil, gee, preserved tamarinds, and spices, for our Indian attendants; presents also of fruit and flowers were daily brought to me in his name. As their religion forbids the slaughter of any but wild animals for the purposes of food, he did not offer any thing for the use of the table; but our servants had liberty to purchase whatever they wanted. Fowls, kid, and venison constituted our principal dishes; the two first we procured in abundance, and of a good quality; the venison was meager, but well tasted, and made excellent soup; it was chiefly the wild antelope, with which the country abounds. Having among my people two bakers, and a person who understood making butter, we were seldom without these essential articles, and of a tolerable quality. Whatever we had occasion to kill was slain in

the night, to avoid offending the prejudices of the people, who, so far from seeking cause of offence, were inclined to make every liberal allowance for the usage of foreigners. The Maywoon politely ordered a pair of horses of the Pegue breed, small, but handsome and spirited, to be selected, and sent to us, from his own stud, accompanied by two grooms, one to attend on each horse; a temporary stable was erected for them within the paling of our court, where they continued whilst we remained at Pegue, and afforded us the means of exercise and pleasing recreation. Being now commodiously settled, I invited Captain Thomas from Rangoon, to spend a few days with us; he accepted my invitation, and came up in a boat provided by the intendant of the port, having previously arranged the concerns of his ship, and the

mode of supplying the crew during his absence.

The solar year of the Birmans was now drawing to a close, and the three last days are usually spent by them in merriment and feasting. We were invited by the Maywoon to be present on the evening of the 10th of April, at the exhibition of a dramatic representation.

At a little before eight o'clock, the hour when the play was to commence, we proceeded to the house of the Maywoon, accompanied by Baba-Sheen, who, on all occasions, acted as master of the ceremonies. The theatre was the open court, splendidly illuminated by lamps and torches: the Maywoon and his lady sat in a projecting balcony of his house; we occupied seats below him, raised about

two feet from the ground, and covered with carpets; a crowd of spectators were seated in a circle round the stage. The performance began immediately on our arrival, and far excelled any Indian drama that I had ever seen. The dialogue was spirited without rant, and the action animated without being extravagant: the dresses of the principal performers were showy and becoming. I was told that the best actors were natives of Siam, a nation which, though unable to contend with the Birmans and Peguers in war, have cultivated with more success the refined arts of peace. By way of interlude between the acts, a clownish buffoon entertained the audience with a recital of different passages; and by grimace, and frequent alterations of tone and countenance, extorted loud peals of laughter from the spectators. The Birmans

seem to delight in mimickry, and are very expert in the practice, possessing uncommon versatility of countenance. An eminent practitioner of this art amused us with a specimen of his skill, at our own house, and, to our no small astonishment, exhibited a masterly display of the passions, in pantomimic looks and gestures: the transitions he made from pain to pleasure, from joy to despair, from rage to mildness, from laughter to tears; his expression of terror, and, above all, his look of idiotism, were performances of first rate merit in their line; and we agreed in opinion, that had his fates decreed him to have been a native of Great Britain, his genius would have rivalled that of any modern comedian of the English stage.

The plot of the drama performed this evening, I understood, was taken from

the sacred text of the Ramayan of Balmiec*, a work of high authority amongst the Hindoos. It represented the battles of the holy Ram and the impious Rahwaan, chief of the Rakuss, or demons, to revenge the rape of Seeta, the wife of Ram, who was forcibly carried away by Rahwaan, and bound under the spells of enchantment. Vicissitudes of fortune took place during the performance, that seemed highly interesting to the audience. Ram was at length wounded by a poisoned arrow; the sages skilled in medicine consulted on his cure; they discovered, that on the mountain Indragurry grew a certain tree that produced a gum, which was a sovereign antidote against the deleterious effects of poison; but the distance was so great that none could be found to undertake the journey: at length Hony-

* Called by Sir William Jones, Valmiec.

maan,* leader of the army of apes, offered to go in quest of it. When he arrived at the place, being uncertain which was the tree, he took up half the mountain, and transported it with ease: thus was the cure of Ram happily effected, the enchantment was broken, and the piece ended with a dance, and songs of triumph.

On the 12th of April, the last day of the Birman year, we were invited by the Maywoon to bear a part ourselves in a sport that is universally practised throughout the Birman dominions on the concluding

* Honymaan is worshipped by the Hindoos under the form of an ape, and is one of the most frequent objects of their adoration: almost every Hindoo pagoda has this figure delineated in some part of it. Honymaan is the term used by the Hindoos to denote a large ape.

day of their annual cycle. To wash away the impurities of the past, and commence the new year free from stain, women on this day are accustomed to throw water on every man they meet, which the men have the privilege of retorting; this licence gives rise to a great deal of harmless merriment, particularly amongst the young women, who, armed with large syringes and flaggons, endeavour to wet every man that goes along the street, and, in their turn, receive a wetting with perfect good humour; nor is the smallest indecency ever manifested in this or in any other of their sports. Dirty water is never cast; a man is not allowed to lay hold of a woman, but may fling as much water over her as he pleases, provided she has been the aggressor; but if a woman warns a man that she does not mean to join in the diversion, it is considered as an

avowal of pregnancy, and she passes without molestation.

About an hour before sunset we went to the Maywoon's, and found that his lady had provided plentifully to give us a wet reception. In the hall were placed three large china jars, full of water, with bowls and ladles to fling it. Each of us, on entering, had a bottle of rose-water presented to him, a little of which we in turn poured into the palm of the Maywoon's hand, who sprinkled it over his own vest of fine flowered muslin; the lady then made her appearance at the door, and gave us to understand that she did not mean to join in the sport herself, but made her eldest daughter, a pretty child, in the nurse's arms, pour from a golden cup some rose-water mixed with sandal-wood, first over her father, and then over each

of the English gentlemen; this was a signal for the sport to begin. We were prepared, being dressed in linen waist-coats. From ten to twenty women, young and middle aged, rushed into the hall from the inner apartments, who surrounded and deluged without mercy four men ill able to maintain so unequal a contest. The Máywoon was soon driven from the field; but Mr. Wood having got possession of one of the jars, we were enabled to preserve our ground till the water was exhausted; it seemed to afford them great diversion, especially if we appeared at all distressed by the quantity of water flung in our faces. All parties being tired, and completely drenched, we went home to change our clothes, and in the way met many damsels who would willingly have renewed the sport; they, however, were afraid to begin without re-

ceiving encouragement from us, not knowing how it might be taken by strangers; but they assailed Baba-Sheen and his Birman attendants with little ceremony. No inconvenient consequences were to be apprehended from the wetting; the weather was favourable, and we ran no risk of taking cold. Having put on dry clothes, we returned to the Maywoon's, and were entertained with a dance and puppet-show that lasted till eleven.

CHAPTER V.

Public Rejoicings cease.—Site of the ancient City of Pegue—Fortifications.—Encouragement given to Settlers.—Description of the new Town—Public Buildings.—Dread of Fire—Precautions used against it.—An Account of the Temple of Shoemadoo.—Visit the Siredaw, the superior Rhahaan, or High Priest of the Country.—Desolated State of the Environs of Pegue—Monastic Retreats of the Rhahaans.—Manufactures at Pegue—Officers of the Provincial Government—Administration of Justice.—Monsoon threatens.—Prepare to depart—take leave of the Viceroy.

SPORTS and festivities ceased with the departed year, a circumstance that gave us great pleasure, as from attending them we were frequently exposed to the influence of a burning sun, which at this sea-

son is most powerful; but though the heat from noon till five in the evening was intense, yet the nights were cool, and the mornings pleasant and refreshing. I generally took advantage of two temperate hours, from the dawn of day till the sun became inconvenient, to walk or ride through the city and its environs; and in all my excursions I never once experienced insult or molestation: curiosity and astonishment were often expressed, but unaccompanied by personal incivility, or by the slightest indication of contempt.

The fate that befel this once flourishing city has already been recounted in the preceding pages. The extent of ancient Pegue may still be accurately traced by the ruins of the ditch and wall that surrounded it; from these it appears to have been a quadrangle, each side measuring

nearly a mile and a half: in several places the ditch is choked up by rubbish that has been cast into it, and the falling of its own banks; sufficient, however, still remains to show that it was once no contemptible defence: the breadth I judged to be about sixty yards, and the depth ten or twelve feet: in some parts of it there is water, but in no considerable quantity. I was informed, that when the ditch was in repair, the water seldom, in the hottest season, sunk below the depth of four feet. An injudicious faussebray, thirty feet wide, did not add to the security of the fortress.

The fragments of the wall likewise evince that this was a work of magnitude and labour; it is not easy to ascertain precisely what was its height, but we conjectured it at least thirty feet, and in breadth, at

the base, not less than forty. It is composed of brick, badly cemented with clay mortar. Small equidistant bastions, about 300 yards asunder, are still discoverable, and there had been a parapet of masonry; but the whole is in a state so ruinous, and so covered with weeds and briars, as to leave very imperfect vestiges of its former strength.

In the centre of each face of the fort there is a gateway about thirty feet wide; and these gateways were the principal entrances. The passage across the ditch is over a causeway raised on a mound of earth, that serves as a bridge, and was formerly defended by a retrenchment, of which there are now no traces.

It is impossible to conceive a more striking picture of fallen grandeur, and

the desolating hand of war, than the inside of these walls displays. Alompra, when he got possession of the city in the year 1757, razed every dwelling to the ground, and dispersed or led into captivity all the inhabitants. The temples or praws, which are very numerous, were the only buildings that escaped the fury of the conqueror; and of these the great pyramid of Shoemadoo has alone been reverenced and kept in repair.

The present King of the Birmans, whose government has been less disturbed than that of any of his predecessors, early in his reign turned his thoughts to the population and improvement, as well as the extension, of his dominions, and seemed desirous to conciliate his subjects by mildness, rather than to govern them by terror. He has abrogated some severe

penal laws imposed by his predecessors upon the Taliens, or native Peguers. Justice is now impartially distributed; and the only distinction at present between a Birman and a Talien consists in the exclusion of the latter from places of public trust and power.

No act of the Birman government is more likely to reconcile the Peguers to the Birman yoke, than the restoration of their ancient place of abode, and the preservation and embellishment of the temple of Shoemadoo. The King, sensible of this, as well as of the advantages that must arise to the state from the increase of culture and population, five years ago issued orders to rebuild Pegue, encouraged settlers by grants of ground, and invited the scattered families of former inhabitants to return and repeople their deserted city.

His Birman Majesty, more effectually to accomplish this end, on the death of the late Maywoon, which happened about five years ago, directed his successor, the present governor, to quit Rangoon, and make Pegue his future residence, and the seat of provincial government of the thirty-two districts of Henzawuddy *.

These judicious measures have so far succeeded, that a new town has been built within the site of the ancient city; but Rangoon possesses so many advantages over Pegue in a commercial point of view, that persons of property who are engaged in business will not easily be prevailed upon to leave one of the finest sea-ports in the world, to encounter the difficulties of a new settlement, where

* The Shanscrit name given to the province of Pegue by the Birmans.

commerce, if any can subsist, must be very confined, from the want of a commodious navigation. The present inhabitants, who have been induced to return, consist chiefly of Rhahaans, or priests, followers of the provincial court, and poor Talien families, who were glad to regain a settlement in their once magnificent metropolis. The number all together perhaps does not exceed six or seven thousand; those who dwelt in Pegue during its former days of splendor are now nearly extinct, and their descendants and relatives scattered over the provinces of Tongho, Martaban, and Talowmeou; many also live under the protection of the Siamese. There is little doubt, however, that the respect paid to their favourite temple of worship, and the security and encouragement held out to those who venture to return, will, in time, accom-

plish the wise and humane intentions of the Birman monarch.

Pegue, in its renovated and contracted state, seems to be built on the plan of the former city, and occupies about one half of its area. It is fenced round by a stockade from ten to twelve feet high; on the north and east sides it borders on the old wall. The plane of the town is not yet filled with houses, but a number of new ones are building. There is one main street running east and west, crossed at right angles by two smaller streets not yet finished. At each extremity of the principal street, there is a gate in the stockade, which is shut early in the evening; and after that time entrance during the night is confined to a wicket. Each of these gates is defended by a wretched piece of ordnance, and a few musqueteers,

who never post sentinels, and are usually asleep in an adjoining shed. There are two inferior gates on the north and south side of the stockade.

The streets of Pegue are spacious, as are those of all the Birman towns that I have seen. The new town is well paved with brick, which the ruins of the old plentifully supply; and on each side of the way there is a drain to carry off the water. The houses of the meanest peasants of Pegue, and throughout the Birman empire, possess manifest advantage over Indian dwellings, by being raised from the ground either on wooden posts or bamboos, according to the size of the building. The kioums or monasteries of the Rhahaans, and the habitations of the higher ranks, are usually elevated six or eight, those of the lower classes from two to four feet.

There are no brick buildings either in Pegue or Rangoon, except such as belong to the King, or are dedicated to their divinity Gaudma: his Majesty having prohibited the use of brick or stone in private buildings, from the apprehension, as I was informed, that if people got leave to build brick houses, they might erect brick fortifications, dangerous to the security of the state. The houses, therefore, are all made of mats, or sheathing boards, supported on bamboos or posts; but from their being composed of such combustible materials, the inhabitants are under continual dread of fire, against which they take every precaution. The roofs are lightly covered, and at each door stands a long bamboo, with an iron hook at the end, to pull down the thatch: there is also another pole, with a grating of iron at the extremity, about three feet square, to suppress flame by pressure.

Almost every house has earthen pots, filled with water, on the roof; and a particular class of people *, whose business it is to prevent and extinguish fires, perambulate the streets during the night.

The Maywoon's habitation, though not at all a magnificent mansion for the representative of royalty, is, notwithstanding, a building of much respectability, compared to the other houses of Pegue. From an outside view, we judged it to be roomy,

* These people are called Pagwaat; they are slaves of government; men who have been found guilty of theft, and, through mercy, had their lives spared. They are distinguished by a black circle on each cheek, caused by gunpowder and punctuation; as well as by having on their breast, in Birman characters, the word *thief*, and the name of the article ftolen, as, on one that I asked to be explained to me, Putchoo Khoo, *cloth thief*. These men patrole the streets at night, to put out all fires and lights after a certain hour. They act as constables, and are the public executioners.

and to contain several apartments, exclusive of that in which he gives audience: it possesses, however, but few ornaments. Gilding is forbidden to all subjects of the Birman empire; liberty even to lacker and paint the pillars of their houses, is granted to very few: the naked wood gave an unfinished appearance to the dwelling of the Maywoon, which, in other respects, seemed well adapted for the accommodation of a Birman family.

The object in Pegue that most attracts and most merits notice, is the noble edifice of Shoemadoo *, or the Golden Supreme. This extraordinary pile of build-

* Shoe or Shuœ, in the Birman tongue, signifies golden; and there can be no doubt that Madoo is a corruption of Mahadeva, or Deo. I could not learn from the Birmans the origin or etymology of the term; it was explained to me as signifying a promontory that overlooked land and water. Praw imports lord, and

ings is erected on a double terrace, one raised upon another. The lower and greater terrace is about ten feet above the natural level of the ground, forming an

is always annexed to the name of a sacred building; it is likewise a sovereign and a sacerdotal title, and is frequently used by an inferior when addressing his superior. The analogy between the Birmans and ancient Egyptians in the application of this term, as also in many other particulars, is highly deserving of notice.

Phra was the proper name under which the Egyptians first adored the Sun, before it received the allegorical appellation of Osiris, or Author of Time; they likewise conferred the same title on their kings and on their priests.

In the first book of Moses, chap. xli. Pharaoh gives "Joseph to wife, the daughter of Potiphera, or the priest of On." In the book of Jeremiah a king of Egypt is styled Pharaoh *Ophra;* and it is not a very improbable conjecture that the title of Pharaoh, given to successive kings of Egypt, is a corruption of the word Phraw or Praw, in its original sense signifying the sun, and applied to the sovereign and priesthood, as the representatives on earth of that splendid luminary.

exact parallelogram: the upper and lesser terrace is similar in shape, and rises about twenty feet above the lower terrace, or thirty above the level of the country. I judged a side of the lower terrace to be 1391 feet; of the upper, 684. The walls that sustained the sides of the terrace, both upper and lower, are in a ruinous state; they were formerly covered with plaster, wrought into various figures; the area of the lower is strewed with the fragments of small decayed buildings, but the upper is kept free from filth, and is in tolerably good order. There is reason to conclude that this building and the fortress are coeval, as the earth of which the terraces are composed appears to have been taken from the ditch; there being no other excavation in the city, or in its neighbourhood, that could have afforded a tenth part of the quantity.

The terraces are ascended by flights of stone steps, which are now broken and neglected. On each side are dwellings of the Rhahaans, raised on timbers four or five feet from the ground; these houses consist only of a large hall; the wooden pillars that support them are turned with neatness; the roofs are covered with tiles, and the sides are made of boards; and there are a number of bare benches in every house, on which the Rhahaans sleep; but we saw no other furniture.

Shoemadoo is a pyramidical building, composed of brick and mortar, without excavation or aperture of any sort; octagonal at the base, and spiral at top; each side of the base measures 162 feet; this immense breadth diminishes abruptly, and a similar building has not unaptly

been compared in shape to a large speaking trumpet*.

Six feet from the ground there is a wide projection that surrounds the base, on the plane of which are fifty-seven small spires of equal size, and equidistant; one of them measured twenty-seven feet in height, and forty in circumference at the bottom. On a higher ledge there is another row, consisting of fifty-three spires of similar shape and measurement.

A great variety of mouldings encircle the building; and ornaments somewhat resembling the fleur-de-lys surround the lower part of the spire; circular mouldings likewise girt it to a considerable

* See Mr. Hunter's Account of Pegue,

height, above which there are ornaments in stucco not unlike the leaves of a Corinthian capital; and the whole is crowned by a *Tee*, or umbrella, of open iron-work, from which rises a rod with a gilded pennant.

The tee or umbrella is to be seen on every sacred building that is of a spiral form: the raising and consecration of this last and indispensable appendage, is an act of high religious solemnity, and a season of festivity and relaxation. The present king bestowed the tee that covers Shoemadoo. It was made at the capital; and many of the principal nobility came down from Ummerapoora to be present at the ceremony of its elevation.

The circumference of the tee is fifty-six feet; it rests on an iron axis fixed in the

building, and is farther secured by large chains strongly rivetted to the spire. Round the lower rim of the tee are appended a number of bells, which, agitated by the the wind, make a continual jingling.

The tee is gilt, and it is said to be the intention of the king to gild the whole of the spire. All the lesser pagodas are ornamented with proportionable umbrellas of similar workmanship, which are likewise encircled by small bells.

The extreme height of the edifice, from the level of the country, is 361 feet, and above the interior terrace, 331 feet.

On the south-east angle of the upper terrace there are two handsome saloons, or kioums, lately erected, the roofs composed of different stages, supported by

pillars; we judged the length of each to be about sixty feet, and the breadth thirty: the ceiling of one is already embellished with gold leaf, and the pillars are lackered; the decoration of the other is not yet completed. They are made entirely of wood: the carving on the outside is laborious and minute: we saw several unfinished figures of animals and men in grotesque attitudes, which were designed as ornaments for different parts of the building. Some images of Gaudma, the supreme object of Birman adoration, lay scattered around.

At each angle of the interior and higher terrace there is a temple sixty-seven feet high, resembling, in miniature, the great temple: in front of that, in the south-west corner, are four gigantic representations, in masonry, of Palloo, or the evil

genius, half beast half human, seated on their hams, each with a large club on the right shoulder. The Pundit who accompanied me, said that they resembled the Rakuss of the Hindoos. These are guardians of the temple.

Nearly in the centre of the east face of the area are two human figures in stucco, beneath a gilded umbrella; one, standing, represents a man with a book before him and a pen in his hand; he is called Thasiamee, the recorder of mortal merits and mortal misdeeds; the other, a female figure kneeling, is Mahasumdera, the protectress of the universe, so long as the universe is doomed to last; but when the time of general dissolution arrives, by her hand the world is to be overwhelmed and everlastingly destroyed.

A small brick building near the north-east angle contains an upright marble slab, four feet high, and three feet wide: there is a long legible inscription on it. I was told it was an account of the donations of pilgrims of only a recent date.

Along the whole extent of the north face of the upper terrace there is a wooden shed for the convenience of devotees who come from a distant part of the country. On the north side of the temple are three large bells of good workmanship, suspended nigh the ground, between pillars; several deers horns lie strewed around; those who come to pay their devotions first take up one of the horns, and strike the bell three times, giving an alternate stroke to the ground: this act, I was told, is to announce to the spirit of Gaudma the approach of a suppliant,

There are several low benches near the foot of the temple, on which the person who comes to pray, places his offering, commonly consisting of boiled rice, a plate of sweetmeats, or cocoa-nut fried in oil; when it is given, the devotee cares not what becomes of it; the crows and wild dogs often devour it in presence of the donor, who never attempts to disturb the animals. I saw several plates of victuals disposed of in this manner, and understood it to be the case with all that was brought.

There are many small temples on the areas of both terraces, which are neglected, and suffered to fall into decay. Numberless images of Gaudma lie indiscriminately scattered. A pious Birman who purchases an idol, first procures the ceremony of consecration to be performed by

the Rhahaans; he then takes his purchase to whatever sacred building is most convenient, and there places it within the shelter of a kioum, or on the open ground before the temple; nor does he ever again seem to have any anxiety about its preservation, but leaves the divinity to shift for itself. Some of those idols are made of marble that is found in the neighbourhood of the capital of the Birman dominions, and admits of a very fine polish; many are formed of wood, and gilded, and a few are of silver; the latter, however, are not usually exposed and neglected like the others. Silver and gold is rarely used, except in the composition of household gods.

On both the terraces are a number of white cylindrical flags, raised on bamboo poles; these flags are peculiar to the

Rhahaans, and are considered as emblematic of purity, and of their sacred function. On the top of the staff there is a henza, or goose, the symbol both of the Birman and Pegue nations.

From the upper projection that surrounds the base of Shoemadoo, the prospect of the circumjacent country is extensive and picturesque; but it is a prospect of nature in her rudest state; there are few inhabitants, and scarcely any cultivation. The hills of Martaban rise to the eastward, and the Sitang river, winding along the plains, gives an interrupted view of its waters. To the northwest, about forty miles, are the Galladzet hills, whence the Pegue river takes its rise; hills remarkable only for the noisome effects of their atmosphere. In every other direction the eye looks over a

boundless plain, checquered by a wild intermixture of wood and water.

Not being able to procure any satisfactory information respecting the antiquity of Shoemadoo, I paid a visit to the Siredaw, or superior Rhahaan of the country, whose abode was situated in a shady grove of tamarind trees, about five miles south-east of the city; where every object seemed to correspond with the years and dignity of the possessor. The trees were lofty; a bamboo railing protected his dwelling from the attack of wild beasts; a neat reservoir contained clear water, a little garden supplied roots, and his retreat was well stocked with fruit trees: some young Rhahaans lived with him, and administered to his wants with pious respect. Though much emaciated, he seemed lively, and in full possession of his

mental faculties: his age, he said, was eighty-seven. The Rhahaans, although subsisting on charity, never solicit alms, or accept of money: I therefore presented this venerable prelate of the order with a piece of cloth, which was repaid by a grateful benediction. He told me, that in the convulsions of the Pegue empire, most of their valuable records had been destroyed; but it was traditionally believed that the temple of Shoemadoo was founded 2300 years ago, by two merchants, brothers, who came to Pegue from Tallowmeou, a district of one day's journey east of Martaban. These pious traders at first raised a temple one Birman cubit* in height; Sigeamee, or the spirit that presides over the elements, and directs the thunder and lightning, in the

* Twenty-two inches.

space of one night increased the size of the temple to two cubits; the merchants then added another cubit, which Sigeamee doubled in the same short time; the building thus attained the magnitude of twelve cubits, when the merchants desisted; that the temple was afterwards gradually increased by successive monarchs of Pegue, the registers of whose names, with the amount of their contributions, had been lost in the general ruin; nor could he inform me of any authentic archives that had escaped the wreck.

In the afternoon Dr. Buchanan accompanied me in a ride about a mile and a half to the eastward of the fort. Thorns and wild bamboos grew in this direction close to the ditch, and the road lay through woods intersected by frequent pathways. We saw no other

habitation, than here and there a poor Peguer's hut, beneath the shelter of a clump of bamboos; but the memorials of former populousness were thickly strewed: hillocks of decayed masonry, covered with the light mould which time generates upon a heap of rubbish, and the ruins of numerous temples, met the eye in every quarter. From these melancholy monuments we could trace the extent of the suburbs, which retained scarce any vestiges of former grandeur; they merely served to point out "campos ubi Troja fuit." We saw no gardens or inclosures, nor any cultivation on that side of the fort; but the pathways being trod by cattle, indicated that the country farther on was better inhabited, and probably in a state of higher improvement.

Returning from our excursion, we met

Mr. Wood, who, early in the morning, attended by his own servants, and some Birman guides, had crossed to the west side of the river, to amuse himself with a day's shooting. He found an inconsiderable village on the opposite bank, in the neighbourhood of which there were rice plantations that extended a mile westward. Beyond these he entered a thick wood, consisting chiefly of the bamboo and pipal trees. Through this wilderness he penetrated nine or ten miles, without meeting an inhabitant, or seeing a single dwelling. Some water-fowls and wood-pigeons were the reward of his toil.

South of Pegue, about a mile beyond the city walls, there is a plain of great extent, for the most part overgrown with wild grass and low brushwood, and bare of timber trees, except where a sacred

grove maintains its venerable shade. A few wretched villages are to be seen, containing not more than twenty or thirty poor habitations. Small spots of land have been prepared by the peasants for tillage, who seem to live in extreme poverty, notwithstanding they possess in their cattle the means of comfortable subsistence; but they do not eat the flesh, and I was told what is remarkable enough, that they seldom drink the milk. Rice, gnapee, a species of sprat which when half putrified is made into a pickle, and used as a seasoning for their rice, and oil expressed from a small grain, with salt, are almost their only articles of food. Their cows are diminutive, resembling the breed on the coast of Coromandel; but the buffaloes are noble animals, much superior to those of India. I saw here, for the first time, some of a light-cream

colour; they are used for draft and agriculture, and draw heavy loads on carts or small waggons, constructed with considerable neatness and ingenuity.

The groves before-mentioned are objects of no unpleasing contemplation; they are the retreats of such Rhahaans or priests as devote themselves to religious seclusion, and prefer the tranquillity of rural retirement to the noise and tumults of a town. In their choice of a residence they commonly select the most retired spots they can find, where shady trees, particularly the tamarind and banyan, protect them from the noon-day sun. In these groves they build their kioums, and here they pass their solitary lives. All kioums or monasteries, whether in town or country, are seminaries for the education of youth, in which boys of a certain

age are taught their letters, and instructed in moral and religious duties. To these schools the neighbouring villages send their children, where they are educated gratis, no distinction being made between the son of the peasant and of him who wears the tsaloe, or string of nobility. A piece of ground contiguous to the grove is inclosed for a garden, where they sow vegetables and plant fruit trees; the Indian sweet potatoe, and the plantain, being the most nutritious, are principally cultivated; the charity of the country people supply them abundantly with rice, and the few necessaries which their narrow wants require. Abstracted from all worldly considerations, they do not occupy themselves in the common concerns of life: they never buy, sell, or accept of money.

The only article of consequence manu-

factured at Pegue, is silk and cotton cloth, which the women weave for their own and their husbands' use. It is wrought with considerable dexterity; the thread is well spun; the texture of the web is close and strong; and it is mostly chequered like the Scotch tartan: but they make no more than what suffices for their own consumption.

In the town of Pegue there are only three persons besides the Maywoon or Viceroy, whose rank entitles them to distinction: these are, the Raywoon, Chekey, and the Sere-dogee. The first is an old man turned of seventy, still vigorous and active, who, it seems, had distinguished himself by his prowess in former wars, and obtained his present post as the reward of valour: he is also invested with high military insignia, and has the pri-

vilege of wearing on his head a gilded helmet, or bason, which is never used except on state occasions, when he exhibits a formidable representation of the meager knight adorned with Mambrino's helmet. The Chekey is a middle aged man, dull and plethoric. Last in office was our acquaintance the Sere-dogee, about forty, sadly afflicted with the rheumatism. The assiduous attentions of this good natured man, though perhaps dictated by policy, were both pleasing and useful, and, to appearance at least, perfectly disinterested. I had presented him with some trifles, a piece of muslin, one of silk, and a few yards of broad cloth; which he accepted, he said, not for their value, but as a token of my good opinion. He one day brought his daughter, a child of six years old, with him, to pay me a visit. After taking notice of her, I spread

a piece of Bengal silk over her shoulders, as is the custom when one makes a present to an inferior. The father thanked me with great cordiality, but returned the piece, saying, he feared I might think he brought the child with a view to extract a present; and that I should have occasion for all the articles I had got to give away, if I expected to satisfy every body who would look for a gratification; I disclaimed the first supposition, but could not overcome the delicacy of his scruples.

These officers exercise the function of magistrates, and hold separate courts at their own houses, for the determination of petty suits. Each has his distinct department; but this private jurisdiction is very limited: all causes of importance relating to property, and matters of an

high criminal nature, are solemnly tried in open court. The three before-mentioned officers unite, and form a tribunal, which sits at the Rhoom *, or public hall of justice, where they hear the parties, examine witnesses, and take depositions in writing: these depositions are sent to the Maywoon, who represents the King, and the Judges transmit their opinions along with the evidence, which the Maywoon either confirms or rejects as he thinks proper, and, in cases of capital conviction, orders execution, or pardons the culprit. From his judgment there lies no appeal, except when it happens that an offender who holds an office under a royal commission is brought to trial; in that case, the minutes of the evidence taken in court must be forwarded to the council of state, to be by them submitted

* Called Roundaye by Europeans.

to the King, who himself applies the law, and awards the sentence.

We had now spent nearly three weeks at Pegue, and seen every thing worthy of notice, which, in a place so lately rescued from a desert state, could not be very interesting or various. Gathering clouds and a gloomy horizon foretold the approach of the south-west monsoon; and we had reason shortly to expect the arrival of a royal messenger, to notify his Majesty's pleasure in regard to our further progress. Having also several arrangements to make at Rangoon preparatory to our departure, it became expedient to appoint a day for quitting Pegue; I therefore intimated to the Maywoon my intention, and fixed on the 25th to take my leave, on which day I visited him in form. After half an hour's cheerful con-

versation, he asked me with much earnestness, whether we were pleased with the reception and treatment we had received; in return, I gave him the most ample assurances of our entire satisfaction, expressed my sense of his past kindness, and my reliance on his future friendship: he seemed happy to find that we were contented, and handsomely apologized for the restraint and apparent rudeness we had sustained on our first coming to Rangoon, which, he said, originated in misconception. Thus we parted with perfect complacency on both sides.

Nor was this acknowledgment, on my part, mere matter of empty compliment; although I thought, that on certain occasions he might have relaxed from the ostentatious dignity which he cautiously preserved; yet he never was deficient in

politeness. His attentions to our accommodation and convenience were unremitting; and we experienced, during the term of our residence, uniform civility from all his dependents, which, in fact, comprises the whole of the inhabitants of Pegue.

CHAPTER VI.

Leave Pegue.—Reach the Village of Deesa. —Abundance of Game.—Buffaloes—their Antipathy to the Colour of Red or Scarlet. Deesa infested by Tigers, and wild Elephants.—Reach Rangoon.—Geographical Position of Pegue, erroneously laid down in modern Maps.—Members of the English Deputation reside within the Fortifications of Rangoon.—Mistrust evinced by the principal Inhabitants.—Description of the Town of Rangoon—Swine and Dogs numerous.—Receive much useful Information from an Italian Missionary.—Account of the People called Careaners—of the Temple of Shoedagong.—Birmans fond of Religious Processions.—Account of the Rhahaans, or Ecclesiastics.—Meet the Seredaw, or High Priest of Rangoon—His Character.—Virgin Priestesses.—Reason of the Abolition of their Order.

Captain Thomas and Dr. Buchanan, with a proportion of the baggage and

servants, left Pegue on the 21st, to return to Rangoon; Mr. Wood and myself were ready to embark on the 26th. We went on board in the afternoon, attended by the Nakhaan, two inferior officers of government, and the public interpreter; the remainder of our domestics followed in a separate boat. The heavy rains that fell during the night incommoded the rowers, and retarded our progress; next morning the weather cleared up, but towards noon the sky again became overcast, and seemed to promise a stormy night. About two o'clock we reached a village on the east bank, called Deesa, at which place we found two commodious houses unoccupied, close to the river. Our boatmen being fatigued, and there appearing no probability of being able to reach Rangoon by the night's tide, I judged it adviseable to take up our quarters here until the morning.

Shortly after our arrival had been announced, the Miou-gee, or chief person of the village, came to pay his respects. He informed me, that at this season of the year his village, and those adjacent, were nearly deserted by the men, who were all sent on the service of government, to make salt by the sea-side, leaving their wives, children, and aged parents at home. The article of salt produces a considerable revenue to the state: the peasantry are employed in preparing it during the hot season: as soon as the monsoon sets in, they return to their habitations, and till their lands until the time comes round for a renewal of their annual labour on the coast, which does not occupy more than four months in the year.

Making inquiries respecting what game the country produced, the Miou-gee told me that it abounded in various kinds,

particularly deer; and that if I chose to walk out with my gun, he would be my guide, and undertake to shew me a herd of antelopes at no great distance. I accepted the offer with pleasure: we went through the village, which did not contain more than fifty houses, comfortable in appearance, and well raised from the ground: the women and children flocked to their doors, and screamed with astonishment at seeing such a phænomenon as an English officer dressed in his uniform. Proceeding to the eastward, about a mile from the town, we entered an extensive plain, where the tall rank grass had been consumed by fire, to allow the growth of the more delicate shoots as pasturage for the cattle. Here we soon discovered a herd of deer, but so watchful and wild that I could only get near enough to fire a random shot from a rifle, which did not

take effect. In endeavouring to approach them unperceived, I left my servants and guide at a considerable distance, and took a circuit by myself, out of sight of my companions. A drove of buffaloes belonging to the villagers happened to be nigh at the time that I discharged my gun; alarmed at the noise, the whole troop raised their heads, and, instead of running away, seemed to stand on the defensive. I walked leisurely from them, when two came out of the herd, and, with their tails and heads erect, trotted towards me, not in a straight line, but making half a circle, as if afraid to advance: they were too near for me to think of escaping by flight; I therefore kept on at a moderate pace, in an oblique direction, stopping at times, with my face towards them, on which they also stood still, and looked at me; but when I re-

sumed my way, they immediately advanced; in this circuitous manner one of them came so close that I felt my situation extremely awkward. I had reloaded my rifle whilst I walked, but reserved it for an extremity. As the beast approached, I stopped more frequently, which always checked his progress for a time; but he had now drawn so nigh, that I expected every instant to have a direct charge made at me: fortunately the Miou-gee from a distance discovered my situation; he hallooed out, and made signs by taking off his blue cotton jacket, holding it up in the air, and then throwing it down. I immediately comprehended his meaning, and, whilst I edged away, slipped off my scarlet coat, which I flung, together with my hat, into some long grass, where they lay concealed; the buffalo instantly desisted from the pursuit,

and returned towards the herd, quietly grazing as he retired. This circumstance proves, that the buffalo entertains the same antipathy to the colour of red or scarlet that some other animals are known to do. The Miou-gee, when I joined him, seemed quite as much alarmed as I was; he said, that if I had sustained any injury, his head would have paid the forfeit of the accident.

The country inland appeared to be cleared of trees and brushwood to a considerable distance; but on the banks of the river, to the north and south, the thickets bordered on the village, and I was told, abounded in jungle* fowl, and

* This is a bird well known to sportsmen in India; it differs little from the common barn-door fowl, except that the wild sort are all similar in colour---a dark red, with black breast and legs. The flesh is very delicate.

peacocks; but my guide requested that I would not venture in, for fear of tigers, which, he said, frequently came prowling round the village at night, and sometimes carried away their dogs, but durst not attack their buffaloes, who, to all appearance, were a match for any tiger, and almost as fierce. The inhabitants also complained of being much molested in the wet season by wild elephants, that occupy, in great numbers, a forest twelve miles to the north-east. These powerful animals, allured by the early crops of rice and sugar-cane, make predatory excursions in large troops, and do a great deal of mischief, devastating more than they devour. The poor peasantry have often to lament the destruction of their most exposed plantations.

Next morning before daylight we left

Deesa with the first of the ebb; at ten o'clock we reached Rangoon, and landed at our former dwelling below the town. Baba-Sheen, who had travelled all night, arrived about the same hour from Pegue.

How much is it to be lamented, that the country we had just left, one of the fairest and most healthful on the globe, should remain, for the greater part, a solitary desert; whilst so many of the human race are condemned to languish away life in noxious regions, or extract, by incessant labour, a scanty subsistence from a barren soil! The natives of the adjacent islands of Nicobar, whose swollen limbs and diseased bodies evince the pestilential atmosphere they breathe, might here prove useful members of general society, live in the enjoyment of a salubrious climate, supply their own, and contribute to re-

lieve the wants of others. But it must require a long and uninterrupted term of peace to renew the population of Pegue. Should it ever be so fortunate, there can be little doubt that Pegue will be numbered amongst the most flourishing and delightful countries of the East.

The authorities on which the geography of the city and river of Pegue has been laid down, though doubtless the best that could be procured, are nevertheless far from being accurate. The Pegue river is called by the natives, Bagoo Kioup, or Pegue rivulet, to distinguish it from Mioup, or river. It is navigable but a very few miles to the northward of the city of Pegue, and for this it is indebted wholly to the action of the tide. It has no communication with the sea, except by the Rangoon river, and in the fair sea-

son, at low water, is almost dry. There seems to have been a mistake of this stream for the Sitang river, about fifteen miles east of Pegue, which is a great and independent body of water, that partly describes the course that in the map is given to what is called the Pegue river.

Nor does the meridian measurement of the city of Pegue, as reported by former travellers, at all correspond with later observations. Mr. Wood, an accurate astronomer, and furnished with excellent instruments, places Pegue in 17° 40′ north latitude, above forty geographical miles south of the position assigned to it in the map. The difference in longitude is less than that of latitude. Mr. Wood, from a mean of observations of the immersion and emersion of Jupiter's satellites, determines Pegue to be in 96° 11′ 15″,

about thirty two miles west of its supposed situation. This eastward error may have given occasion to the mistake of the Sitang river for that of Pegue. Indeed the authorities for the geography of this country are, in most places imperfect, and in some altogether erroneous.

The ruinous state and uncomfortable situation of the dwelling assigned to us on our first arrival, rendered it desirable to remove into the town; and, as a proper understanding was now established with the Rangoon government, no objection whatever was made to our taking up our abode wherever we thought proper. I accordingly hired two large houses, one for the gentlemen of the deputation, the other for our attendants; these were made of timber, sufficiently spacious, but ill adapted to the climate, being close, and covered

with tiles, which retained and transmitted the heat long after the sun had set: they were, however, the best that could be procured, and we felt ourselves more at ease from residing within the inclosure of what is called the Fort of Rangoon.

Being freed from the restraint imposed on us before we went to Pegue, we now enjoyed the full liberty of collecting information, and seeing whatever was worth notice. Although a liberal licence was thus granted to us, I still found, on the part of those persons who were best capable of communicating knowledge, a mistrustful unwillingness to reply to my questions, which they evaded, rather than declined answering; a conduct that created in me more regret than surprise; it was a natural jealousy, which at this time I did not think it prudent to increase

by minute inquiries into the internal state of the country, and the political œconomy of their government.

Increasing trade, and consequent population, have extended the present town far beyond the limits that formerly comprehended Rangoon, as it was originally founded by Alompra. It stretches along the bank of the river about a mile, and is not more than a third of a mile in breadth. The city or miou* is a square, surrounded by a high stockade, and on the north side it is further strengthened by an indifferent fosse, across which a wooden bridge is thrown; in this face there are two gates, in each of the others only one. Wooden stages are erected in several places within the stockade, for musquet-

* Miou is a term applied either to a city or a district.

eers to stand on in case of an attack. On the south-side, towards the river, which is about twenty or thirty yards from the palisade, there are a number of huts, and three wharfs, with cranes for landing goods. A battery of twelve cannon, six and nine-pounders, raised on the bank, commands the river; but the guns and carriages are in such a wretched condition, that they could do little execution. Close to the principal wharf are two commodious wooden houses, used by the merchants as an exchange, where they usually meet in the cool of the morning and evening, to converse, and transact business. The streets of the town are narrow, and much inferior to those of Pegue, but clean, and well paved: there are numerous channels to carry off the rain, over which strong planks are laid, to prevent an interruption of intercourse. The houses

are raised on posts from the ground; the smaller supported by bamboos, the larger by strong timbers. All the officers of government, the most opulent merchants, and persons of consideration, live within the fort; shipwrights, and people of inferior rank, inhabit the suburbs; and one entire street, called Tackally, is exclusively assigned to common prostitutes, who are not permitted to dwell within the precincts of the fortification.

Swine are suffered to roam about the town at large: these animals, which are with reason held unclean, do not belong to any particular owners; they are servants of the public, common scavengers; they go under the houses, and devour the filth. The Birmans are also fond of dogs, numbers of which infest the streets; the breed is small, and extremely noisy;

whenever we walked out, the inhabitants were apprized of our approach by the loud barking of these troublesome curs.

I was now honoured occasionally with visits from all the men of official consequence in Rangoon; but although they paid me this compliment, the greatest formality and caution were still preserved in their deportment and language. Ba-ba-Sheen was the only person with whom we held familiar intercourse, and through him every attention was paid to our wants. From this conduct, however, I judged it prudent to suspend the astronomical observations which Mr. Wood was desirous to make, and not to employ my draftsman until a longer acquaintance had removed their suspicions.

Amongst the foreigners who came to

pay their respects to the English gentlemen, was an Italian missionary, named Vincentius Sangermano, who had been deputed to this country about twenty years before, by the Society de propaganda: he seemed a very respectable and intelligent man, spoke and wrote the Birman language fluently, and was held in high estimation by the natives for his exemplary life and inoffensive manners. His congregation consisted of the descendants of former Portugueze colonists, who, though numerous, are in general very poor; they, however, had erected a neat chapel, and purchased for their pastor a piece of ground a mile from the town, on which a neat comfortable dwelling was built, and a garden inclosed. He is indebted for his subsistence to the voluntary contributions of his flock; in return for their charity, he educates their children,

instructs them in the tenets of the Romish faith, and performs mass twice a day at the chapel.

From this reverend father I received much useful information; he told me of a singular description of people called Carayners, or Carianers, that inhabit different parts of the country, particularly the western provinces of Dalla and Bassien, several societies of whom also dwell in the districts adjacent to Rangoon. He represented them as a simple, innocent race, speaking a language distinct from that of the Birmans, and entertaining rude notions of religion. They lead quite a pastoral life, and are the most industrious subjects of the state: their villages form a select community, from which they exclude all other sects, and never reside in a city, intermingle, or marry

with strangers. They profess, and strictly observe, universal peace, not engaging in war, or taking part in contests for dominion, a system that necessarily places them in a state of subjection to the ruling power of the day. Agriculture, the care of cattle, and rearing poultry, are almost their only occupations. A great part of the provisions used in the country is raised by the Carianers, and they particularly excel in gardening. They have of late years been heavily taxed and oppressed by the great Birman landholders, in consequence of which numbers have withdrawn into the mountains of Arracan. They have traditional maxims of jurisprudence for their internal government, but are without any written laws: custom, with them, constitutes the law. Some learn to speak the Birman tongue, and a few can read and write it imperfectly.

They are timorous, honest, mild in their manners, and exceedingly hospitable to strangers.

The temple of Shoedagon *, or Dag-oung, about two miles and a half north of

* The name of this temple, which signifies Golden Dagon, naturally recalls to mind the passages in the Scriptures where the "house of Dagon" is mentioned, and the image of idolatry bows down before the holy ark.

"Next came one
"Who mourn'd in earnest, when the captive ark
"Maim'd his brute image, head and hands lopt off
"In his own temple, on the grunsel edge,
"Where he fell flat, and sham'd his worshippers:
"Dagon his name, sea monster, upward man
"And downward fish: yet had his temple high
"Rear'd in Azotus, dreaded through the coast
"Of Palestine, in Gath and Ascalon,
"And Accaron and Gaza's frontier bounds."

MILTON, B. I.

The resemblance is too striking to pass unnoticed; at the same time it should be observed, that analogies of this kind, though always pleasing, are often deceptive.

Rangoon, is a very grand building, although not so high, by twenty-five or thirty feet, as that of Shoemadoo at Pegue. It is much more ornamented; the terrace on which it stands is raised on a rocky eminence, considerably higher than the circumjacent country. It is ascended by above a hundred stone steps, that have been suffered to fall into decay. The situation renders Shoedagon a conspicuous object at the distance of many miles. The tee and the whole of the spire are richly gilded, which, when the sun shines, exhibit a singularly splendid appearance.

The small auxiliary buildings are yet more numerous than those that surround the base of the Pegue Temple. Perceiving that several of these were in a ruinous state, whilst the foundations of others were just laid, and some half finished, I

asked, why they did not repair the damages of the old before they erected new ones, and was told that to mend a decayed praw or temple, though an act of piety, was not so meritorious as to erect a new one; that sometimes the old ones were repaired by those who were unwilling or unable to be at the expence of a complete building; but this entirely depended on the means and inclination of the donor.

The borders of the terrace on which the temple is raised are planted with shady trees in regular rows; from this eminence there is a beautiful and extensive prospect; the Pegue and Rangoon rivers are seen winding through a level woody country, and the temple of Syriam, little inferior to those that have been described, stands near the junction of the streams. The rainy monsoon had now set in, and inundations

were formed in several places. It would have been a more pleasing, though perhaps less picturesque scene, had the plains been cleared, and the fields laid out for cultivation: we could observe few marks of improvement; woods, lakes, and rivers, presented themselves on every side.

The road leading from the city to the temple is formed with care; a wide causeway in the centre prevents the rain from lodging, and throws it off to the sides: numberless little spires are ranged along the edge of the road, in which are niches to receive small images of their divinity Gaudma. Several kioums or monasteries lay in this direction, generally removed a short distance from the public way, under the shade of pipal or tamarind trees.

The Birmans, like all the natives of the

East, are fond of processions; scarcely a week passes that there is not a religious display in Rangoon; either a funeral of some person who leaves sufficient to defray the expence of a pompous public burning, or the ceremony of admitting youths into the convents of the Rhahaans; on the latter occasion parents vie with each other, and spare no cost: the principal charge consists in entertainments, and the customary presents to the Rhahaans. The age of induction is generally from eight to twelve years. When a boy is to be introduced into a convent, either as a temporary resident, or with a view to future consecration, his friends prepare their offerings of cloth, rice, preserves, fruit, fans, cushions, mats, and household utensils. On an appointed day he parades the streets, dressed in yellow, and mounted on a horse richly caparison-

ed, led by two servants: a band of music goes before, and a party of Rhahaans encircle him: his male friends follow in a troop, and the females of their families bring up the rear, the latter carrying on their heads the offerings meant for the Rhahaans. Thus they proceed to the convent of which the novice is to become a member, where he is presented in form to the senior of the brotherhood. This ceremony is repeated three times, and at each perambulation fresh presents are to be provided.

The kioums or convents of the Rhahaans are different in their structure from common houses, and much resemble the architecture of the Chinese; they are made entirely of wood: the roof is composed of different stages, supported by strong pillars; the inside comprehends

one large hall; the whole house is open at the sides; some are curiously carved with various symbolic representations of the divinity. There are no apartments for the private recreation of the Rhahaans; publicity is the prevailing system of Birman conduct, and they admit of no secrets either in church or state.

From the many convents in the neighbourhood of Rangoon, the number of Rhahaans and Phonghis * must be very considerable; I was told that it exceeded 1500. This estimate must include those in their novitiate. Like the Carmelites, they go barefooted, and have their heads close shaven, on which they never wear any covering.

* The inferior order of priests, vulgarly called Tallapoins.

Yellow is the only colour worn by the priesthood; they have a long loose cloke which they wrap round them so as to cover most part of the body; they profess celibacy, and to abstain from every sensual indulgence. The prescribed punishment for a Rhahaan detected in an act of incontinence is, expulsion and public disgrace; the delinquent is seated on an ass, and his face daubed with black paint interspersed with spots of white; he is thus led through the streets, with a drum beating before him, and afterwards turned out of the city: but such instances of degradation are very rare. The juniors are restricted from wandering about licentiously, either by day or night. There is a prior in every convent, who has a discretionary power to grant permission to go abroad.

The Rhahaans never dress their own

victuals, holding it an abuse of time to perform any of the common functions of life, which, so long as they occupy, must divert them from the abstract contemplation of the divine essence. They receive the contributions of the laity ready cooked, and prefer cold food to hot. At the dawn of the morning they begin to perambulate the town, to collect supplies for the day: each convent sends forth a certain number of its members, who walk at a quick pace through the streets, supporting with the right arm a blue lackered box, in which the donations are deposited; these usually consist of boiled rice mixed with oil, dried and pickled fish, sweetmeats, fruit, &c. During their walk they never cast their eyes to the right nor to the left, but keep them fixed on the ground; they do not stop to solicit, and seldom even look at the donors, who ap-

pear more desirous to bestow, than the others to receive. The Rhahaans eat but once a day, at the hour of noon. A much larger quantity of provision being commonly procured than suffices for the members of the convent, the surplus is disposed of, as charitably as it was given, to the needy stranger, or the poor scholars who daily attend them to be instructed in letters and taught their moral and religious duties.

In the various commotions of the empire, I never heard that the Rhahaans had taken any active share, or publicly interfered in politics, or engaged in war: by this prudent conduct they excited no resentment: the Birmans and Peguers professing the same religion, whoever were conquerors equally respected the ministers of their faith.

I had heard much of the veneration paid to the Seredaw, or head of the Rhahaans at Rangoon, and by chance had an opportunity of seeing him: he lived in a very handsome monastery half a mile from town, on the road leading to Shoedagon. One evening, taking my customary walk, I met him returning from the pagoda; there was nothing to distinguish him from the common Rhahaans; he wore the same yellow dress, and his head and feet were bare; his years and abstracted appearance induced me to ask who he was; on being told, I turned and joined company with him, for he would not have stopped or gone out of his way had a monarch accosted him. He entered freely into conversation, but kept his eyes fixed invariably on the ground before him: he was a little old man, of seventy-five, and still walked with firm step on even ground; but when he

ascended the stairs of his dwelling, he required support. He goes every day, at the same hour, to the temple, to offer his devotions, and performs the journey, which, going and returning, cannot be less than four miles, on foot. Approaching his grove, he civilly asked me to come in and rest myself; I followed him, and we took our seats on mats spread on the floor, in the centre of a large and lofty hall. Several young Rhahaans, who had attended him in his walk, ranged themselves at a small distance. I was, however, disappointed in the expectations I had formed; he betrayed a worldly pride inconsistent with his years and sacred function; he announced, with much pomp, that he was the head of the church at Rangoon, and ostentatiously displayed engraven on iron plates, his sacerdotal titles, which had been conferred on him by the present and

the late King. He seemed to possess little of the humility which distinguished the aged prelate of Pegue, and I left him impressed with much less reverence than I had entertained for his character before our interview.

I was told, that formerly there were nunneries of virgin priestesses, who, like the Rhahaans, wore yellow garments, cut off their hair, and devoted themselves to chastity and religion; but these societies were long ago abolished, as being injurious to the population of the state. At present there are a few old women who shave their heads, wear a white dress, follow funerals, and carry water to the convents; and these venerable dames have some portion of respect paid to them.

CHAPTER VII.

Population of Rangoon—an Asylum for insolvent Debtors.——Religious Toleration granted to Foreigners.--Province of Dalla, and Town of Maindu.—Mima-Shun-Rua, or the Village of Prostitutes.—Barbarous Law respecting the female Relations of insolvent Debtors.—Treatment of the Women.—River of Rangoon commodious for Ship-building—several Ships of Burthen on the Stocks.—Birman Shipwrights.——Imperial Mandate arrives for the English Deputation to proceed to the Capital—the Maywoon of Pegue ordered to accompany it.—Huntsmen employed to catch Alligators and Rhinoceroses.—Reverence of the Birmans for their braminical Astrologers—they declare a propitious Day for the Maywoon to depart——he leaves Rangoon——English Deputation prepares to follow——Description of the Boats, &c.

THE population of Rangoon is considerable; there are 5000 registered taxable

houses in the city and suburbs; if each house be supposed to contain six people, the estimate will amount to 30,000. Having long been the asylum of insolvent debtors from the different settlements of India, it is crowded with foreigners of desperate fortunes, who find from the Birmans a friendly reception, and, for the most part, support themselves by carrying on a petty trade, which affords a decent subsistence to those who act prudently. Here are to be found fugitives from all countries of the East, and of all complexions: the exchange, if I may so call the common place of their meeting, exhibits a motley assemblage of merchants, such as few towns of much greater magnitude can produce; Malabars, Moguls, Persians, Parsees, Armenians, Portugueze, French, and English, all mingle here, and are engaged in various branches of com-

merce. The members of this discordant multitude are not only permitted to reside under the protection of government, but likewise enjoy the most liberal toleration in matters of religion; they celebrate their several rites and festivals, totally disregarded by the Birmans, who have no inclination to make proselytes. In the same street may be heard the solemn voice of the Muezzin, calling pious Islamites to early prayers, and the bell of the Portugueze chapel tinkling a summons to Romish Christians. Processions meet and pass each other without giving or receiving cause of offence. The Birmans never trouble themselves about the religious opinions of any sect, nor disturb their ritual ceremonies, provided they do not break the peace, or meddle with their own divinity Gaudma; but if any person commit an outrage, which the Mussul-

men, in their zeal for the true faith, will sometimes do, the offender is sure to be put into the stocks; and if that does not calm his turbulent enthusiasm, they bastinado him into tranquillity.

The violence of the rainy monsoon prevented our making distant excursions, which, in the present stage of the mission, I should perhaps have avoided had the weather been favourable. Our morning rides and evening walks seldom extended beyond the great temple, that being the best road. Dr. Buchanan one morning went across to the west side of the river, on the bank of which, opposite to Rangoon, is a considerable town, called Maindu, the residence of the governor of the province of Dalla, who has already been mentioned as having come down to meet the deputation on its first arrival.

This government is entirely distinct from Rangöon, on the east side. The rank of the Governor is much inferior to that of the Maywoon of Pegue; notwithstanding which, the latter cannot apprehend a criminal within the jurisdiction of Dalla, by his own authority. The city of Dalla, from whence the province takes its name, is said to be on the west side of the China Buckier river, and was formerly a place of considerable importance. The town of Maindu is composed of one long street; at the east end is a creek, which goes all the way to Bassien, and has twelve feet depth of water, at high tide; on the west side is a smaller creek, on the bank of which stands a village called Mima-Shun-Rua, or the village of prostitutes, being inhabited wholly by women of that description.

Prostitution in this, as in all other countries, is the ultimate resort of female wretchednesss; but here it is often attended with circumstances of peculiar and unmerited misery. Many who follow this course of life are not at their own disposal, nor receive the earnings of their unhappy profession; they are slaves sold by creditors to a licensed pander, for debts more frequently contracted by others than by themselves. According to the laws of Pegue, he who incurs a debt which he cannot pay becomes the property of his creditor, who may claim the insolvent debtor as his slave, and oblige him to perform menial service until he liquidates the debt; nor does the unhappy man always suffer in his own person alone, his immediate relatives are often included in the bond, and, when that is the case, are liable to be attached and

sold to discharge the obligation. The wretchedness into which this inhuman law plunges whole families is not to be described. Innocent women are often dragged from domestic comfort and happiness; and from the folly or misfortune of the master of the house, in which they perhaps have no blame, are sold to the licensed superintendant of the Tackally, who, if they possess attractions, pays a high price for them, and reimburses himself by the wages of their prostitution.

In their treatment of the softer sex the Birmans are destitute both of delicacy and humanity, considering women as little superior to the brute stock of their farms. The lower class of Birmans make no scruple of selling their daughters, and even their wives, to foreigners who come to pass a temporary residence amongst

them. It reflects no disgrace on any of the parties, and the woman is not dishonoured by the connection.

Respecting the trade of Rangoon, the commodities which the country is capable of producing, the present state of its commerce, and the obstacles that check its growth, I shall have occasion to speak more at length in another part of this work: it is sufficient here to observe, that teak, the most durable wood that is known, and best adapted for the construction of ships, is produced in the forests of the Birman and Pegue empires in inexhaustible abundance. The river of Rangoon is equally commodious for the construction of ships; the spring tides rise twenty feet in perpendicular height; the banks are soft, and so flat that there is little need of labour for the formation of docks: vessels

of any burden may be built. Nature has liberally done her part to render Rangoon the most flourishing seaport of the eastern world.

There were at this time several ships from 600 to 1000 tons burden on the stocks; one belonging to the Maywoon of Pegue, about 900 tons, was considered by professional men as a specimen of excellent workmanship; it was entirely wrought by Birman carpenters, and formed on a French model, as are most of the ships built in this river, the Birmans having received their first rudiments of the art from that nation. Three or four vessels of burden were likewise in a state of forwardness, belonging to English adventurers; and one still larger than the rest, almost ready to be launched, the property of the Governor of Maindu, the town on

the opposite side. If this ship was not composed of prime materials, the building at least was well attended to; every morning the governor's wife crossed the river in her husband's barge, attended by two or three female servants; after landing, she commonly took her seat on one of the timbers in the yard, and overlooked the workmen for some hours, after which she returned home, and seldom missed coming back in the evening, to see that the day's task had been completed. The slip on which the ship was built happened to be contiguous to our first habitation, a circumstance that caused us to remark her constant visits: curiosity, however, did not prompt her, or any of her attendants, to come within our precincts, whilst decorum deterred us from making advances towards an acquaintance. Her husband never accompanied her, and she

did not seem to require his aid. Women in the Birman country are not only good housewives, but likewise manage the more important mercantile concerns of their husbands, and attend to their interests in all outdoor transactions: they are industrious to the greatest degree, and are said to be good mothers, and seldom from inclination unfaithful wives. If this be a true character, they meet with a most ungenerous return, for, as was before observed, the men treat them as beings of a very subordinate order.

Whilst we admired the structure and materials of these ships, we could not overlook the mode in which the work was executed, and the obvious merit of the artificers. In Bengal, a native carpenter, though his business is commonly well done, yet, in his manner of perform-

ing it, excites the surprise and ridicule of Europeans; he cuts his wood with a diminutive adze, in a feeble and slow manner; and when he wants to turn a piece of timber, has recourse to a coolee, or labourer, that attends him; numbers there compensate for the want of individual energy; notwithstanding this, they finish what they undertake in a masterly manner. The Birman shipwrights are athletic men, and possess, in an eminent degree, that vigour which distinguishes Europeans, and gives them pre-eminence over the enervated natives of the East; nor do I imagine that the inhabitants of any country are capable of greater bodily exertion than the Birmans.

The month of May was now far advanced, and we became a little impatient at remaining so long in a state of uncer-

tainty, especially as the officers of government did not at all relax in the formality and coldness of their deportment, nor were we yet assured what might be the nature of our reception at court. From this unpleasant state of suspense we were at length agreeably relieved by the arrival of a letter from the Maywoon of Pegue to the council of Rangoon, acquainting them that he had received the imperial mandate to make preparations for our conveyance by water to the capital; and that it was his Majesty's farther pleasure that he should accompany the deputation in person. Baba-Sheen lost no time in imparting to me the intelligence, which was soon after communicated by an official message from the Raywoon, inviting me to the Rhoom, or public hall, to hear the order formally announced in council. This was a ceremony which I begged

leave to decline; but I sent my Moonshee, or Persian secretary, to attend the meeting.

Our visit to Ummerapoora being now a measure decided on by the highest authority, it became requisite to make some inquiries respecting our accommodations for the voyage. Being well aware that no steps could be taken except through the regular channels of authority, I applied to the Raywoon to obtain permission to purchase suitable boats for the use of the deputation: an inferior officer waited on me, to represent, on the part of the Raywoon, that it was inconsistent with the usage of their government to admit of a public minister being at any expence for his conveyance; and that the superintendant of the port had received instructions to prepare as many boats as I thought

necessary. This, I understood, was an established point of etiquette, from which they could not possibly recede. I expressed regret at putting the government to so great an expence; but requested, as the season was boisterous, and the voyage not a short one, that the vessels might be examined by an English shipwright, and such alterations made as would render them commodious to Europeans, which the boats of the natives, both from their structure and insufficient covering, are far from being. My desire met a cheerful compliance.

Conformably to the imperial mandate, the Maywoon left Pegue, and arrived at Rangoon on the 25th of May: his retinue was numerous; and as no person of high official consequence, when summoned to attend the Golden Feet, can assure him-

self of returning to his government, or office, in order to be prepared for whatever might occur, he brought with him his wife and family as the companions of his voyage. On the day after his arrival I paid him a visit; he was extremely civil, and assured me of his ready services on every occasion.

About this time an order came from court to the provincial government of Pegue, which furnished a subject of much conversation. I was told that the Emperor of China, having never seen a rhinoceros or an alligator, entertained an ardent desire to view those formidable animals before his death, and had intimated his wish, through a provincial legate from Yunan, who had lately arrived at Ummerapoora for the purpose of settling some mercantile arrangements. The

King of Ava, solicitous to gratify his august brother of China, had signified his pleasure to his chief minister, who sent the order beforementioned, the purport of which, I understood, was to catch twenty alligators, and as many of the rhinoceros tribe, and convey them to the metropolis, whence they were to be transported to the imperial city of Pee-Kien. Those who made elephant-hunting their profession, were dispatched to the forests, and strong nets were thrown across the Pegue river, on the sands of which, when the tide ebbed, I had seen, in the course of my journey to Pegue, a much greater number than his Majesty required. The fishermen began successfully; several alligators were taken in two or three days, and put into boats, in the bottom of which wells were constructed. The crocodile and alligator, although they are accounted amphibious

animals, cannot long support life out of the water. The rhinoceros hunters, I afterwards learned, were not equally fortunate.

In a former part of this work it has been mentioned, that the Birmans, notwithstanding they are Hindoos of the sect of Boodh, and not disciples of Brahma, nevertheless reverence the Brahmins, and acknowledge their superiority in science over their own priests or Rhahaans. The partiality which the King, who is guided in every movement by astrological advice, manifests in their favour, has given celebrity to their predictions, and brought them so much into fashion, that there is not a viceroy or Maywoon who has not in his household some of these domestic sages, whom he consults on all important occasions, and sometimes on occasions of

no importance whatever. The Maywoon of Pegue, whose viceroyalty, though not the most extensive, is the most lucrative in the empire, maintains a number of Brahmins, whose counsel he desired as to the most fortunate day and hour to commence the journey. After due deliberation, the 28th of May, at eight o'clock in the morning, was pronounced the most propitious for departure, and that time was accordingly appointed. Unluckily our boats could not be got in readiness quite so soon; but as there was no resisting the stars, the Maywoon declared his regret at the supernatural necessity that compelled him to precede us, promising, however, to wait at the head of the Rangoon river, where it branched from the great stream of the Irrawaddy, until we should join him, the distance being not more than two days' journey. I acqui-

esced in the propriety of submitting every temporal concern to the disposal of fate, and hoped that he would not suffer any consideration for us to interfere with his own arrangements. On the day fixed, at seven in the morning, he passed our habitation, and proceeded with much pomp to the water-side, himself on horseback, his lady in a palanquin, and his children carried astride on men's shoulders. His own barge was very handsome, and of the structure appertaining to nobility; it was attended by several war-boats ready manned, with a number of common vessels; some belonging to his retinue, others to merchants, who took the opportunity of his protection to transport their merchandize duty free. The Maywoon reposed for a short time in the house that is used as an exchange; and when the great drum that proclaimed the hour struck the

first stroke, he stepped on board, and was followed by his family: in an instant every boat pushed from the shore with a loud shout; the oars were vigorously plied, and, the flood tide setting strong, the fleet was soon carried to the northward of the city.

The boats, six in number, that had been provided for our accommodation, were now ready to receive us; Dr. Buchanan, Mr. Wood, and myself, had each a separate vessel; the Hindoo Pundit, whose religious prejudices rendered it irksome to him to mingle with Mussulmen, had likewise a small boat to himself. The guard, and such attendants as we did not immediately require, occupied another of a larger size, in which our heavy baggage, field equipage, &c. were stowed: a kind of cutter was equipped as a kitchen,

which was seldom wanted, as our own barges were sufficiently spacious to admit of all culinary purposes, without inconvenience to the inhabitants. These barges were of a very different construction from the flat-bottomed vessels called budgerows, that are used on the Ganges; ours were long and narrow, and required a good deal of ballast to keep them steady; even with ballast, they would have been in constant danger of oversetting, had they not been provided with outriggers, which, composed of thin boards, or oftener of buoyant bamboos, make a platform that extends horizontally six or seven feet on the outside of the boat, from stem to stern. Thus secured, the vessel can incline no farther than until the platform touches the surface of the water, when she immediately rights; on this stage the boatmen ply their oars, or impel

the boat forward by poles; such an addition affords a convenience unknown to the navigation of the Ganges; it is the place exclusively appropriated to the crew, who sleep on it at night, and, by putting up mats, or spreading a sail from the roof of the boat to the outside edge, shelter themselves from the weather. My barge was sixty feet in length, and not more than twelve in the widest part; by taking away one thwart beam near the stern, laying a floor two feet below the gunwale, and raising an arched roof about seven feet above the floor, a commodious room was formed, fourteen feet long, and ten wide, with a closet behind it; at the stern there was a stage, on which the Leedegee, or steersman, stood, and a vacant space of seven or eight feet, where a kettle might be boiled, or dinner provided. On each side of the cabin a small

door opened on the platform, and there were three windows which, when raised, admitted a free circulation of air. The roof was made of bamboos covered with mats, and over all was extended a painted canvas, that effectually secured us from the heaviest rain. The inside was neatly lined with matting. The conveyances of the other gentlemen were nearly of the same size and construction. Twenty-six boatmen composed the crew of my vessel, exclusive of the Leedegee, who is the chief or captain.

CHAPTER VIII.

Depart from Rangoon.—Alteration in the Temperature of the Air.—Reach Panlang.—Mosquitoes unusually numerous and troublesome.—Pass Kettoree-Rua, or Parroquet Village.—Towns of Yangain-Chain-Yah, and Denoobew.—A handsome Temple.—Segahghee—Summeingtoh—Yeoungbenzah.—Singular Appearance of a Tree.—Taykyatt—Terriato, or Mango Village—Taambooterra—Kioumzeik, or Convent Stairs.—Indigo Plant—Birman Method of preparing it for Use.—Manufactory of Cotton Cloth.—Shwaye-Gaim—Sabbaymeoun—Gnapeezeik.—Violent Current.—Yeagaim—Kanounglay, or Little Kanoung.—Rich Plantations.—Kanounghe, or Great Kanoung.—Slow Progress.—Meyahoun—Gilded Temples, and spacious Convents—Numerous trading Boats—Country fruitful.—Pasheem—Kianggain.

—Violent Gust of Wind.—Tirroup-miou, or Chinese Town.—Mountains.—Tzeezau.—Peeing-ghee.—A Ship on the Stocks.—Beautiful Appearance of the Banks.—Great Difficulty in surmounting the Stream—Extraordinary Exertions of the Boatmen—Fleet dispersed—Baggage-boat lost.—The Fleet reassembles.—Reach the City of Peeaye-mew, or Prome.

On the 29th of May we were ready to depart: our baggage and attendants had been previously sent on board, and the boats containing the royal presents had received their lading from the Sea-Horse. We embarked in the evening, slept on board, and at 10 o'clock next morning, when the tide served, pushed off, accompanied by our civil acquaintance, the Seredogee of Pegue, Baba-Sheen, Jacob Aguizar, the Armenian merchant, and the chief interpreter of Rangoon; these personages

had boats of their own. Pauntchoo, my Portugueze servant, being with me, and three or four of the boatmen speaking a little of the Hindostan language, I was at no loss to make myself understood. An under Seree, or inferior clerk, was stationed in my boat, professedly to attend to my wants, and receive my orders, and probably with a view to observe and report my actions. It was, however, an ostensible compliment, and accepted by me in that light.

We rowed without intermission until three in the afternoon. A short way from Rangoon the river becomes narrower, with a winding course, owing to which we did not advance more than three leagues in a direct line. We passed a small village on the left: the banks on each side were shaded with trees. The

fleet brought to on the north side of the river, when Dr. Buchanan went on shore, and found an extensive plain covered with short grass, beyond which there was a large village. We experienced a pleasing alteration in the temperature of the air on the water, from what we had felt on shore. The day before our departure, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the thermometer in the house stood at 98°; next day, at the same hour, the quicksilver only reached 90° on the river. When the flood made, we got under way, rowed hard all night, and anchored in the morning near a town called Panlang, which, the Seree informed me, had once been a city of considerable magnitude, and from which the Rangoon river is frequently called the Panlang-mioup. The number of boats that were moored near it, indicated that it was still a place of some im-

portance. The soil is rich, but there appeared to be little cultivation in its neighbourhood: here a branch of the river shapes its course to the south. At two in the afternoon we pursued our voyage, and continued rowing till seven in the evening, when we brought to, having passed three small villages in the way, one of which was surrounded by thick groves of plantain trees. At this place we spent a very comfortless night; it is a part of the river remarkable for being infested by mosquitoes of an unusual size, and venomous beyond what I ever felt in any other country: two pair of thick stockings were insufficient to defend my legs from their attacks; when in bed the curtains afforded some protection, but the servants, and even the boatmen, got no rest all night. A kind of reed that grows on the bank, breeds and harbours these

insects in the utmost abundance; fortunately, the colony does not extend many miles; a war boat that rows quick can escape them, but a heavy vessel must lie for one tide within their action.

On the first of June, at daybreak, we left Panlang, and stopped about nine o'clock at a hamlet on the right, where we saw a few gardens, and several travellers passing along a road at some distance on the plain. The river here contracts greatly, and does not appear to be more than two hundred yards across. Our people having taken refreshment, we continued our voyage. After leaving Panlang, the influence of the tide becomes much weaker, and the water, during the ebb, is fresh. Our progress was but slow, having neither wind nor stream to befriend us. In three hours we reached Kettoree-

Rua, or Parroquet village; and in two hours more came to Yangain-Chain-Yah. Here we entered the great river, and stopped for the night, our boats being fastened with hawsers to the bank. The course of the stream was nearly north and south, and about a mile wide.

Next morning, at the dawn of day, we pushed off; and at one o'clock joined the Maywoon, who, with his suite, and a vast concourse of boats, was waiting our arrival; he sent a polite message, with a present of some milk, fine rice, and fruit. Heavy rains falling, we remained here all day: the banks were steep, and there was nothing to attract notice. At a distance on the opposite shore we could perceive the temple of Denoobew.

At eight o'clock in the morning of the

3d of June the whole fleet got under way. Being now in the great river, and no longer sheltered by high and close banks, we spread our canvas, and, favoured by a strong southerly wind, sailed against the stream. At nine we passed Denoobew, an extensive town, ornamented with a lofty temple, resembling Shoedagon in form, but of smaller size. The adjacent fields appeared cultivated; several large mercantile boats were lying here, and more at a small village on the opposite side; the river was still low; the rains, although set in, had not yet materially affected it. We passed, in the course of our day's journey, many islands of sand formed by different streams of the river in the dry season, but which are entirely covered when the waters swell; on some of these islands there are trees and verdure. We left the towns of Se-

gahghee on the east, and Summeingtoh on the west. Our journey this day was very delightful; the weather turned out fine, and the wind was so favourable, that though the stream was strong, we passed the banks at the rate of three miles an hour: there were not less than a hundred sail of boats of different sorts in company, and the whole was a cheerful and pleasing sight. The Maywoon being considered as commodore of the fleet, his movements regulated the rest. We stopped at sunset near the town of Yeoungbenzah, where I missed the Seredogee of Pegue, who seldom failed making an evening visit to drink tea, and ask questions about England. Baba-Sheen told me, that he was left behind at the head of the Rangoon river, where he was bargaining for another boat, his own being rather crazy, and so deeply laden with

merchandize that he durst not venture it on the great river.

We left Yeoungbenzah at daybreak, and passed in our course several islands of sand. In one place we perceived the roots and stump of a tree growing close to the water's edge, under a high bank, about fourteen feet beneath the surface of the soil: this singular appearance is to be accounted for by supposing, that where the bank was now raised, there had formerly been a sand level with the water, on which a tree took root, and had been covered by annual accumulations from the river during the season of inundation. It is probable, that the tall reeds and coarse grass which every year rot and incorporate with the sand of the river form the fine soil of the plains; thus aquatic exuviæ are to be discovered every where deep in

the earth: the stream, however, washes away on one side as much as it deposits on the other, and, as is the case with all rivers flowing through champaign countries, is continually changing its channel. In the morning we passed Taykyatt, a long and straggling town on the west side; also Terriato, or Mango village, small, but beautifully situated on a high commanding bank that overlooks the country on the opposite side to a great distance; it is surrounded by groves of mango trees, from which it takes the name. Taambooterra, on the same side, is a long town. The country, in this journey, did not appear so well inhabited as that we passed through the day before. At half past four we came to for the night at Kioumzeik, or Convent Stairs; a long sand intervened between us and the town; at this season the convex side

of the windings of the river always terminates in a level sand. Two temples, not large, but gilded on the outside from top to bottom, made a very brilliant appearance. There were here many monasteries, and the Rhahaans belonging to them were strolling up and down the banks, as curiosity led them. Near the river side were some fields planted with indigo, which throve in full luxuriance, and was nearly ripe; the natives prepare it without any skill: a large quantity of the weed was steeping in an old boat sunk in the river, which was substituted in the room of a vat. They do not take the trouble, or perhaps do not know how, to purify and reduce it to a hard refined consistence, but are satisfied with it in a liquid state; they use it to colour a coarse kind of cotton cloth, which is manufactured here in great quantities. The in-

digo is very cheap, and doubtless might, by proper management, be cultivated in this country to the highest advantage.

The town of Kioumzeik is well built, and seems to be in a state of improvement: there are several interruptions in it, caused by water-courses, over which good wooden bridges are built. The manufacture of cotton cloth is the source of its prosperity. A town called Henzadah, near to Kioumzeik, is of much greater antiquity. Numerous cart-roads and path-ways evince that there is an extensive communication maintained with the interior country; but we saw little cultivation of grain, and only a few gardens. Buffaloes and other cattle were grazing in large herds on the neighbouring plain.

On the next day, June 5th, we put off

at the first dawn, and passed in the course of our journey several small villages, none of which presented any thing worth notice; Sekayebeeim, on the east, was the most considerable. The bank on one side was high, and the sands extensive on the other. The course of the river runs deep beneath an overhanging bank, at a sluggish rate, not exceeding a mile in the hour. The southerly wind was not so strong as usual, and the temperature of the air had become much hotter; the thermometer, which on the preceding day stood at 78°, on this rose to 86°; but still the heat was not oppressive. We brought to in the afternoon, south of a town called Ackeo; the evening was cloudy, and threatened a thunder storm; a long and low strand lay between the boats and the town; I did not go on shore: Dr. Buchanan, however, ventured, and met with nothing to

repay the trouble he took in traversing a plain of heavy sand.

We set off the following morning at the usual hour, and saw a few villages, but none remarkable; one on the east bank was situated in a large garden of plantain trees. At noon our boatmen tracked the boats along the sands, and thus made greater progress than they could either by rowing or setting with poles. Notwithstanding the general name of the river is Irrawaddy, I learned that different parts of it are distinguished by different appellations, taken from places of note on its banks, as though we should call the Thames, at appropriate places, the Gravesend river, the London river, &c. At two o'clock the sky lowered, and black clouds in the north-west quarter threatened one of those violent gusts which are frequent

at this season; the Ledeegee, of his own accord, brought to on the west side, under the shelter of an high bank. As soon as the boat was made fast, the Doctor and I clambered up the steep; the country round was covered with reeds as tall as a man's head; there were many pathways leading through them; but we were dissuaded by the Birmans from entering, for fear of tigers, which are numerous here, and particularly frequent that kind of cover. The storm broke before it reached us, and, after a delay of two hours, we set sail with a southerly wind: passing a large village on the west, the Seree told me it was named Shwaye-Gaim, and that the inhabitants sometimes, during the rainy season, found gold dust in the sand of the river, which is washed down by the periodical rains. A town nearly opposite, on the east side, is called Sabbaymeoun.

It was eight o'clock in the evening when we stopped close to the town of Gnapeezeik. Gnapee, or Napee, a sort of sprat half pickled and half putrid, has already been described as a favourite and universal sauce used by the Birmans to give a relish to their rice; Zeik signifies a landing place: whence we concluded that this town is an emporium for that commodity, which, in itself, forms an extensive branch of traffic.

Early in the morning we left Gnapee, and had to contend against a strong current, with very little assistance from the wind; the western bank was planted with pipal and mango trees. Yeagaim, on the right, and Kanounglay, or Little Kanoung, on the left, were the most remarkable places; near the latter we saw several plantations of fruit trees, the mango, plan-

tain, jack-fruit, and custard apple. The fields near it were regularly laid down, and well fenced; many boats, some of them of a large size, were building on the banks, and the general aspect of things denoted peace and plenty. A little time brought us to Kanoungghe, or Great Kanoung, a long town, with a good quay, and well constructed wooden stairs, consisting of one hundred steps, descending to the water's edge. The population of this part of the country must be considerable. In getting round a bluff point we found much difficulty, owing to the rapidity of the current; the fleet was, in consequence, widely scattered, some surmounting the stream with more ease than others; the wind was but faint, and the weather exceedingly sultry. At two o'clock the thermometer rose to 94°. Our boatmen being harassed, I brought to

early in the evening, under a pleasant bank; the Maywoon had got far a-head. Before tea I walked out with my gun, but had no success, seeing only a few quails and some wild pigeons. The country was tolerably well cleared; and, though there was not much cultivation, it seemed in a state of preparation for the husbandman.

Our progress on the following day was more expeditious; we soon reached the neighbourhood of Meyahoun, formerly Loonzay, rendered memorable in the wars between the Birmans and Peguers. It is a very ancient city, stretching two miles along the margin of the river. Houses in cities or in villages differ very little; but this town was distinguished by numerous gilded temples, and spacious convents; a great variety of tall wide-spreading trees gave the place an air of vene-

rable grandeur; and under the shade of these, several Rhahaans were luxuriously reposing. We saw not less than two hundred large boats at the different quays, which, on an average, might be reckoned each at sixty tons burthen, all provided with good roofs, and masted after the country manner. They seemed much better constructed than the unwieldy wullocks* of Bengal. I was informed, that the neighbourhood of Meyahoun is uncommonly fruitful in rice, and that a large quantity is exported annually to the capital. Here also were capacious granaries belonging to the King, built of wood, and covered with thatch; these are always kept filled with grain ready to be transported to any part of the empire in which there happens to be a scarcity; a misfortune that sometimes occurs to the

* A heavy boat used on the river Ganges.

higher provinces, where the annual rains are neither so certain nor so copious as in the southern districts: this wise and humane institution strongly evinces the solicitude of the monarch for the welfare of his people. Leaving Meyahoun, we passed Pasheem, whence a nullah, or water-course, leads to the south-west; also Kianggain: at both these places there were a number of trading boats. At half past two o'clock we were assailed by a violent north-west gust of wind, that, acting with the current, drove us back nearly two miles before we could reach the shore. The river here was more than a mile wide, although it had not yet attained its full monsoon height. At four we again got under way, and saw, on the east side, Tirroup-miou, or Chinese Town. During our journey this day we plainly discerned the Anoupectoumiou, or great

western hills that divide this country from Arracan; the particular mountains in sight, the boatmen said, were named Taungzo. The districts we passed through this day were exceedingly populous, and in most parts cultivated. We brought to late in the evening, under a steep bank, near the inconsiderable village of Tzeezau.

We left, before daylight, a very uncomfortable situation: the night was sultry, and the high bank that hung over us prevented a free circulation of air; added to this, we were annoyed by myriads of stinking insects that issued from the reeds and coarse grass. The pleasantness of the day compensated for the inconveniences of the night. As we advanced, the western range of hills closed upon the river, and in some places displayed very beautiful scenery. Approaching the

town of Peeing-ghee, on the west side, the rocky banks rose abruptly to the height of two or three hundred feet, the sides of which were richly clothed with hanging trees of variegated foliage. The confinement of the water in this place increased its rapidity, and I could not but admire the exertions made by the boatmen in stemming so violent a stream; oars were useless, and the perpendicular banks afforded no footpath to track: it therefore became necessary to impel the boat forward by bamboo poles, a labour at which the Birmans are uncommonly expert. When the pole is firm in the ground, they place the top of it against the muscles of the shoulder, just above the collar bone, then raising that shoulder, and bending forward, they bring the whole weight of the body to bear upon the end of the pole; in this manner they

traverse the platform from stem to stern, following each other in quick succession on both sides of the boat, having small thwart bamboos fastened on the platform, a yard asunder, to prevent their feet from slipping. Owing to this mode of fixing the end of the pole against the muscles that reach from the back of the neck to the shoulder, a callosity is formed, and a Birman boatmen always appears to be high shouldered. I could not discover why they preferred that method to the more obvious and easy one of pushing with the flat of the shoulder; they, however, performed what I am persuaded none but Birmans could effect. We were an hour in passing the extreme force of the current, which did not exceed four hundred yards.

The town of Peeing-ghee, and that of

Sahlahdan, a little above it, export a great part of the teak timber that is carried to Rangoon. The forests extend along on the western mountains, and were in sight from the boats. The trees are felled in the dry season, and, when the monsoon sets in, are borne by the torrents to these towns. There was a ship on the stocks close to Peeing-ghee, of 400 tons burthen; a Mussulman merchant from Surat, out of economy, chose this place for building at, in preference to Rangoon; he meant, as soon as the hull should be finished, to float it down the stream. I was told that there was a good deal of hazard in the navigation, the distance of which, including the windings of the river, probably exceeds 150 miles; but he calculated the difference of expence to be adequate to the risk. This adventurer furnished a proof of the confidence that might be

placed in the Birman government, and the security that a stranger has for his property. The teak tree, although it will grow on the plains, is a native of the mountains. The forests, like most of the woody and uncultivated parts of India, are extremely pestiferous; an inhabitant of the champaign country considers a journey thither as going to inevitable destruction. The wood-cutters are a particular class of men, born and bred in the hills; but even they are said to be unhealthy, and seldom attain longevity.

The difficulty of this day's journey had dispersed the fleet; the lightest and best manned boats of course got a-head of the rest, and several were obliged to join their crews, and carry up each vessel singly by their united strength. Half a mile above Sahlahdan I overtook the May-

woon, who had arrived some time before me, and was waiting for us. The boatmen being greatly harassed, he recommended us to pass the night here. In the evening we took a walk together: the Maywoon was attended by eight or ten servants armed with spears and musquets: we both fired at game without success. The Birmans, even the common boatmen, are fond of fowling to a degree of childish delight; rather than not shoot, they will fire at sparrows. I never was more importuned than by them for shot, which they do not know how to fabricate. No schoolboy could be more pleased than the Ledeegee of my boat, when I one evening lent him a gun to shoot wild pigeons. In this, as well as many other particulars, their disposition is strikingly contrasted with the habits of apathy and indolence that characterize the natives of Asia in

general. My companions, Dr. Buchanan and Mr. Wood, not joining the party before dark, I expressed my apprehensions about them to the Maywoon, who was so good as to dispatch a war-boat to their assistance; the Doctor came about ten o'clock, but Mr. Wood's people being quite exhausted, he was obliged to stop three miles short of us, and the baggage-boat did not arrive at all. A little after midnight I was awakened to receive the unpleasant intelligence that she was wrecked: the boatmen, it seems, had nearly surmounted the difficult passage below Peeing-ghee, when, either from a remission of their efforts, or a more impetuous gush of water than usual, the boat suddenly got stern-way, and when once she lost ground there was no recovering it; the boatmen resigned her to the current, which swept her back with

irresistible violence; fortunately, she set towards the side, where a landing was practicable, and, taking the ground on a rocky bottom, she bulged, and filled with water. The people got on shore safe, and it was expected that most of the articles on board would be recovered; but such as were liable to injury from the water were irretrievably spoiled.

Early the next morning, June 10th, Mr. Wood joined company, and the Maywoon sent an officer to Peeing-ghee with directions to procure a proper conveyance for my people, and render them every possible assistance; he likewise intimated to me his desire to remain three or four days at Meayday, a town and district two days journey north of Prome, which he holds in jaghire by a grant from the king. This intention was far from being dis-

agreeable to me or to any of the party, as our boatmen were fatigued, and the servants and the guard required a short time to adjust their conveniences for the remainder of the voyage.

The country contiguous to the river, in this day's journey, was pleasingly diversified with hill and valley, and with spots of cleared ground and hanging woods; the range of mountains retired in a westerly direction as we advanced to the north, but smaller hills still skirted the river. We sailed before a fine southerly breeze, and enjoyed a climate far more temperate than I ever experienced in Hindostan at the same season of the year.

We left, a-stern on the west, Podang-mew, a large and populous city; on the right, Shwaye-do-mew was the most im-

portant town. About noon we stopped to avoid a squall from the north-west: in the evening, my boat being a-head, I reached the city of Peeaye-mew, or Prome, on the east side; the other gentlemen did not cross the river till next morning.

CHAPTER IX.

Description of Prome.—Surprise excited by an European.—Prome sometimes called Terreketteree—Origin of the Name—singular Analogy.—Village of Pouoodang—Temple--Zee-ain--Kamma--Neoungbenzeik.—Gale of Wind.—Yeoungbenzeik—Serraipmew—Trees—Soil.——Meeaday—House erected for the English Agent—Mode of Structure—Birmans punctilious in whatever relates to Rank.—Town of Meeaday—Indulgence to Strangers—Cultivation—invited by the Maywoon to visit his Gardens—Remarks--meet a Caravan--curious Stone—numerous Visitants—leave Meeaday.—Pass Meealsah-gaim.—Reach Longhee.—Visit a Kioum.—Tradition respecting Longhee.—Romantic Scenery.—Tigers numerous.—Cattle—Soil—Produce.—Excursion of the Portugueze Pantchoo.—Tangho—a Fort and City of Importance.—Beetle Nut.—

Kayns, or Mountaineers.—Shawbunder arrives—His whimsical Appearance.

PROMPTED by curiosity to view a place so renowned as Prome is in Birman history, for having been the scene of many long sieges and bloody conflicts, as soon as my boat was made fast I hastened on shore, and a short way from the bank entered a long strait street, in which I walked for near a mile. The buildings were not remarkable; but, though I saw little to notice, I found that I was myself an object of universal wonder; an English officer dressed in uniform was a phænomenon perhaps never before seen in this part of the world. My attendants also created no little surprise; the dogs, numbers of which infested the streets, set up a horrid barking; the men gaped, the children followed me, and the women,

as usual, expressed their astonishment by loud laughter and clapping their hands; yet not the least indication of contempt was manifested, nor any thing done that could be construed into an intention to offend. Whichever way I turned, the crowd respectfully opened, and the most forward were restrained by others. The notice I took of a little girl, who was alarmed at our appearance, seemed to be very gratifying to the parents, and the mother, encouraging her child, brought her close to me. Had I entered a house, I have no doubt but the owners would have offered me the best it contained. Kindness to strangers is equally the precept and the practice of Birmans.

At the upper end of the present city are to be seen the ruins of the ancient fort of Prome: it had been a small pentagon,

built of brick, and from its situation must have been very strong. The modern fort is nothing more than a palisaded inclosure with earth thrown up behind it. Low hills on the eastern side approach the town, in which the rains have formed channels down to the river, that are crossed by wooden bridges. I passed some stone-cutters' yards, where artificers were manufacturing flags for pavements, and slabs and vases for the use of temples, out of a fine freestone which is found in that neighbourhood. Adjacent to the town there is a royal menagery of elephants, consisting of two rows of lofty well-built stables, in which these animals are lodged during the rains. I saw some that had been lately caught, under the discipline necessary to render them docile.

The city of Prome, and the province in which it stands, are the jaghire, or estate of the second son of the king; they likewise give him his title. Prome is sometimes called Terreketteree, or single skin; and the Birmans have an old legendary tale respecting the origin of this name: it is related, that a favourite female slave of Tutebong-mangee, or the mighty sovereign with three eyes, importuned her lord for a gift of some ground; and being asked of what extent, replied in similar terms with the crafty and amorous Elisa, when she projected the site of ancient Carthage. Her request was granted, and she used the same artifice. The resemblance of the stories is curious.

I had not leisure to go through the whole of the town, but was informed that it contained more inhabitants than

Rangoon, and had a better supplied market. The Seree told me, that the ruins of a large fort and city much surpassing the present stood about a league eastward of the town: the lateness of the hour, however, prevented me from continuing my researches.

We departed from Prome at an early hour on the 11th of June, and sailed before a strong southerly gale till we came to Pouoodang, a small village built on the western bank of the river. A high hill of a conical form rises abruptly behind it, on the top of which there is a temple of peculiar sanctity, having once been the abode of Gaudma; ithe mpression made by the foot of the divinity is shewn indented on a slab of marble. The Maywoon had gone before us to perform his devotions at this place of worship.

The hill seemed difficult of ascent; several of our people went up, but the day being wet and stormy I declined the undertaking. We afterwards made head against a violent current by the aid of a tempestuous wind: there was, for a long way, little improvement close to the river; obscure hamlets at distant intervals just served to shew that the country was not without inhabitants. Zeeain, on the west, appeared a pretty village. Towards evening we reached Kammah, on the east side: it is the chief town of a district that bears the same name, and makes large exports of teak timber for the Rangoon market. We did not stop here, but continued our course as far as Neoungbenzeik, where we arrived too late to make many observations; this also is a town of some respectability. We were here on a lee shore, under a high and rocky bank.

The Maywoon not liking the appearance of the weather, and thinking it unsafe to remain in such a situation all night, ordered the boatmen to row across to a long sand, where we might be secure from danger in the event of a storm: nor was this precaution ill timed; for about midnight it blew a hurricane: we, however, ran no risk; our boats touched the soft sand, and were moored by strong hawsers reaching from the stem and stern to the shore. Mr. Wood and Dr. Buchanan, who had not come up, found shelter in a creek, where they passed the night. As soon as the storm commenced, the Maywoon detached a war-boat to their assistance.

Our associates joined the fleet betimes in the morning, and we sailed immediately. Our journey this day was dis-

agreeable, from the violence of the southerly wind, which, meeting the stream, caused a heavy swell: the boats pitched deep, and were very uneasy. We passed a small village on the left bank, whence, I was told, a road leads through the mountains to Arracan. Yeoungbenzeik, or Indian fig-tree stairs, on the east side, is a fine village, situated in a romantic country; so also is Pelon, a place remarkable for boat-building; and Samban, famed for its iron manufactory. At a particular part the river was divided into two distinct branches, separated by a sand; each branch we judged to be a mile wide; and when the water rises so as to overflow the sands, the breadth cannot be less than four miles from bank to bank. Every village we saw was ornamented with one or more small temples. In the evening we brought to, at a town called Sirriap-

mew. The country around was pleasingly diversified with swelling grounds covered with stately trees, particularly with the tamarind and mango; Dr. Buchanan measured one of the latter, and found it, at the height of his shoulder from the ground, twelve feet in circumference: some of the tamarind and pipal trees seemed still larger. Many of the rising grounds were planted with indigo; but the natives suffer the hills, for the most part, to remain uncultivated, and only plough the rich levels: they everywhere burn the rank grass once a year to improve the pasture. We saw many people at labour. The soil is a fine mould, and would produce abundant crops in proper hands: but the Birmans will not take much pains; they leave half the work to nature, which has been very bountiful to them. Their thirst for con-

quest does not seem to have enriched their country.

In the morning, when we left Sirriapmew, the wind blew as usual from the southward with great violence. At noon we reached Meeaday, the personal estate of the Maywoon of Pegue, who is oftener called, from this place, Meeaday Praw, or Lord of Meeaday, than by his viceroyal titles. Here, in compliance with the wishes of the Maywoon, we proposed staying a few days.

It is a mark of respect, and a distinction of rank, for a person journeying on the water to have houses built for his accommodation on the banks, at the places where he means to stop. When the King goes on the river, or travels by land,

buildings of the royal order of architecture are erected wherever he is to halt. In the manner of constructing houses, whether temporary or lasting, strict observance is paid to the form, which is indicative of the rank of the occupant; nor dare any subject assume a mode of structure to which he is not legally entitled: the distinction consists chiefly in the number of stages of which the roof is composed. The subordination of rank is maintained and marked by the Birmans with the most tenacious strictness; and not only houses, but even domestic implements, such as the beetle box, water flaggon, drinking cup, and horse furniture, all express and manifest, by shape and quality, the precise station of the owner; nor can one person intrude upon the rights of another, under penalty of incurring a most severe punishment, which

is never remitted. The Maywoon had obligingly given directions to have a house constructed on the bank for us, of the order appertaining to nobility, but of what particular class I could not easily ascertain; and I refrained from minute inquiries, as it might appear fastidious, and give an unfavourable impression to those whom it was my inclination to conciliate.

The materials of which these houses are made are always easy to be procured; and the structure is so simple, that a spacious, and by no means uncomfortable dwelling, suited to the climate, may be erected in one day. Our habitation, consisting of three small rooms, and a hall open to the north, in little more than four hours was in readiness for our reception: fifty or sixty labourers completed it in that time, and, on emergency, could

perform the work in much less. Bamboos, grass for thatching, and the ground rattan, are all the materials requisite; not a nail is used in the whole edifice: a row of strong bamboos, from eight to ten feet high, are fixed firm in the ground, which describe the outline, and are the supporters of the building; smaller bamboos are then tied horizontally by strips of the ground rattan, to these upright posts; the walls, composed of bamboo mats, are fastened to the sides, with similar ligatures; bamboo rafters are quickly raised, and a roof formed, over which thatch is spread in regular layers, and bound to the roof by filaments of rattan; a floor of bamboo grating is next laid in the inside, elevated two or three feet above the ground; this grating is supported on bamboos, and covered with mats and carpets: thus ends the process, which is not more simple

than effectual. When the workmen take pains, a house of this sort is proof against very inclement weather. We experienced, during our stay at Meeaday, a severe storm of wind and rain; but no water penetrated, nor thatch escaped: and if the tempest should blow down the house, the inhabitants would run no risk of having their brains knocked out, or their bones broken; the fall of the whole fabric would not crush a lady's lap-dog.

Having got possession of our dwelling, Mr. Wood, Dr. Buchanan, and myself, took a walk to view the town and adjacent country: our boats had brought to at the southern extremity of Meeaday. It is a place of no great magnitude, but extremely neat: there are two principal streets, and at the north end of the present town are to be seen the ruins of a

brick fort, which, like all other forts of masonry in the Birman empire, is in a state of dilapidation. At a short distance there is a pleasant river which flows through a fertile plain affording some rich pasture-ground, and interspersed with plantations of tobacco. On the south and south-east sides, the town is inclosed by a deep ravine, the banks of which are cut perpendicular; and the remains of an old brick wall were discoverable, which was probably a defence to the former sub urb. We observed many small temples and convents apart from the town, situated in groves of mango, tamarind, and pipal trees of uncommon stateliness and beauty. The Maywoon had a residence here, also a pleasure house and beetle garden at some distance. Notwithstanding his manners were still very formal, and evidently desirous of little personal inter-

course, he continued invariably attentive, and daily sent me such presents as he thought would be acceptable, such as fruit, fish, and milk. Although it is sinful, according to the Birman tenets, to deprive any being of life to satisfy a carnivorous appetite, yet the inhabitants do not scruple to kill game of all kinds, and abstain only from domestic animals; even in this they often relax, and always grant a most liberal indulgence to strangers. I was allowed to send my Portugueze servant to the neighbouring villages to purchase fowls, which we got very good, and sometimes were able to procure kids. The Birman farmers do not breed sheep, goats giving so much more milk. It was privately intimated to me, that there would be no crime if a servant of mine should shoot a fat bullock when he met one; that it would be ascribed to accident,

and I might make reparation to the owner, who would think himself amply recompensed for his loss by two tackals, about six shillings; and the beast being dead, there could be no sin in eating it; but that a public sanction could not previously be given to slaughter one. I declined supplying our table by this evasive logic, and preferred the want of beef to the risk of giving offence, and wounding the feelings of people who omitted no opportunity to manifest towards us hospitality and kindness.

North of the town, about a mile, there is a good deal of cultivation, chiefly of rice; the fields were well laid down, and fenced. This quarter is beautifully wooded, and diversified with rising grounds. We observed many cart-roads and path-ways leading into the country in various direc-

tions. The soil is composed of clay and sand, and in some places is very stony, particularly near the river. Early on the 14th the Maywoon politely sent us an invitation to accompany him on the same evening to his garden-house: I was not well, and excused myself; Mr. Wood was otherwise engaged, but the Doctor undertook to represent us. The Maywoon supplied him with a horse for his conveyance, and rode himself; they crossed the small river before mentioned, and traversed a country partly cultivated, and partly wooded: the road was indifferent, and led through two very neat villages. They also passed several straggling houses, which, considered as country cottages, were extremely comfortable. In their way they saw a caravan of waggons, which had come from a great distance, loaded with goods of different

sorts for traffic. The inhabitants in many places were employed in clearing the ground, and burning the long grass and brushwood. On arriving at the garden, about five miles distant, the Maywoon and his company, among whom the Doctor was the most distinguished, were regaled with tea and sweetmeats, and returned late in the evening nearly by the same road.

In the course of our walks, not the least curious object that presented itself was a flat stone, of a coarse gray granite, laid horizontally on a pedestal of masonry, six feet in length, and three wide, protected from the weather by a wooden shed. This stone, like that at Pouoodang, was said to bear the genuine print of the foot of Gaudma; and we were informed, that a similar impression is to be seen on

a large rock situated between two hills, one day's journey west of Memboo. On the plane of the foot upwards of one hundred emblematical figures are engraven in separate compartments: two convoluted serpents are pressed beneath the heel, and five conch shells, with the involutions to the right, form the toes: it was explained to me as a type of the creation, and was held in profound reverence. There is said to be a similar impression on a rock * on Adam's Peak, in the island of Ceylon; and it is traditionally believed, both by the Birmans, the Siamese, and the Cingaleze, that Gaudma, or Boodh, placed one foot on the continent, and the other on the island of Ceylon. The neighbouring Rhahaans had no objection to my

* See Baldæus; also Knox's Historical Relation of Ceylon.

painter's taking a copy of it, a task that he performed with great exactness *.

On our return, we met a caravan of waggons travelling from the southern country towards the capital, eighteen in number: these vehicles were well constructed, and more commodious and neat than the clumsy gawries or carts of India. Each waggon was drawn by six bullocks, and several spare ones followed, to supply the place of any that might fall sick or lame. A good tilted roof of bamboo, covered with painted cloth, threw off the rain. They contained not only merchandize, but also entire families, the wives, children, monkies, cats, parroquets, and

* Annexed is a plate of the impression, to enable the learned antiquary to compare this curious symbolic representation with the sacred hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians.

all the worldly substance of the waggoner. Each bullock had a bell under his throat. The wheels not being greased, a horrid noise announced the approach of the caravan long before it could be seen. They travel slowly, from ten to fifteen miles a day. At night the waggons are disposed in a circle, and form a barrier, within which, the carriers feed their cattle, light fires, and dress their victuals, secure from the attacks of tigers, which much infest the less populous parts of the empire.

We remained at Meeaday until the 22d of June. During our stay I made short excursions to different parts of the country, and found little variation in its appearance; it was very beautiful, though but half cultivated, and I was every where treated with respect. The news of the mission had reached the place before we

arrived, and excited a general curiosity to see the Boomien of the Colars, or the general of the strangers, as they were pleased to denominate me. Not only the better class of the inhabitants of Meeaday came to visit us, but likewise people of condition from all the towns and villages twenty miles round: I have sometimes received eight or ten different companies in a morning. When a party wished to be introduced, a message was sent to ask permission; which being obtained, they entered the room in a crouching position, and sat down on their heels, men and women alike; they always brought a gift of something, whatever they supposed might be acceptable; tobacco, onions, fine rice, &c.: no company presented themselves empty handed; it would not have been respectful; of course, their offerings drew from me a suitable return,

such as fillets of Indian muslin to the women, and a Cossembuzar silk handkerchief to the men. Several parties of women came unaccompanied by their husbands, or any of their male friends; and according to the notions entertained by them, there was nothing indecorous in it; they were unconscious of any thing but an innocent desire to gratify curiosity, and manifest respect: women of a better class were always accompanied by a train of female attendants; and, like the sex every where, were more lively, good humoured, and inquisitive, than the men.

Early on the 22d of June matters were arranged for the prosecution of our voyage, and the fleet was in readiness to depart. The articles saved from the boat that had been wrecked below Peeing-ghee were

dried; our attendants, however, had suffered a material loss; but a serviceable boat had been provided for them in lieu of the one that was lost. At eleven o'clock we pushed off, the Maywoon leading the van: the day turned out tempestuous and gloomy, and the wind blew hard from the south. In a short time we passed Meealsah-gain, on the west, a large village at the foot of a fine swelling wooded lawn, ornamented with some neat temples. Our way through the water was very rapid, not less than five miles an hour, and at one time it blew so violently that we were obliged to make for the shore. The range of hills, which in our course this day approached nearest to the river, were covered with a blue mist. We passed some villages of no note: the country seemed populous, and herds of cattle were grazing on the banks. About

seven o'clock we brought to for the night on the west side.

At seven in the morning, after a night of unremitting rain, we left an uncomfortable situation, and sailed till we came to an extensive island, which divided the river into two branches; we took the eastern side, and, on account of the inclemency of the weather, brought to at the lower town of Loonghee, opposite the south extremity of the island. The width of the stream between the main land and the island is about 500 yards. In the afternoon the rain ceased, but the wind continued. Dr. Buchanan and I walked to a convent of Rhahaans, that seemed to be of more than ordinary note: we found it a good building, and, ascending a flight of steps, took the liberty of entering without ceremony. The neat-

ness of the inside corresponded with the external appearance: a number of Gaudmas, richly gilt, and of various sizes, were ranged on a bench to receive the adorations of the pious. It was the eighth day of the moon, which is the Birman sabbath, and several persons were sauntering up and down, waiting for the hour of prayer. The superior, a man advanced in years, was sitting on his elevated seat when we went in: he expressed much surprise at our appearance and dress, but was extremely civil: he presented me with a scroll, written with a stylus on a papyrus leaf, which, he said, contained a sacred exhortation, and requested I would preserve it in remembrance of Shoedagonga Seredaw, which, it seems, was his title. He asked why the Doctor did not wear a scarlet dress like mine, and being informed of his profession, begged a pre-

scription for a sore throat, which almost hindered him from articulating. The Doctor promised to send him a gargle, and we took our leave.

The infant son of the Maywoon had been unwell for some time, and his illness had now increased to a dangerous height: the anxious parent sent Baba-Sheen to me to intimate his desire of remaining where we were until his child grew better, the tempestuousness of the weather agitating the boat so much that he was afraid it might increase the fever. I had no scruple in indulging so natural a wish; but as the spot we were in was much exposed, and had many disadvantages, we moved to a more commodious situation, nearly two miles farther on, opposite the north end of the island. A war-boat was dispatched express to the

capital to bring down medicine, and a celebrated professor of physic; in the mean time all the physicians of the country, to the number of twenty, were assembled, to consult and prescribe for the sick infant.

Longhee, or Great Cable, takes its name from the following circumstance: a curious ligament of stone unites a pointed rock, which rises in the middle of the stream, with the opposite bank; it has the appearance of a petrified cable, and the natives relate, that one hundred years ago a large rope floating down the river, ceased its course at this place, and that one end adhering to the rock, and the other to the bank, the rope was changed into stone. They also say that the opposite island formerly constituted a part of one situated fifteen miles higher up,

but was severed from it by an earthquake, and carried down to the place where it now rests. The quality which the waters of the Irrawaddy possess of changing wood into stone, of which we afterwards saw innumerable instances, renders the transmutation of the cable by no means an impossible circumstance. The Birmans, however, are deeply tainted with that credulity which ignorance is ever disposed to pay to tales of fiction and to miraculous events.

Whether removed by an extraordinary convulsion of nature, and by a still more extraordinary transportation, or whether encircled by the river from the disposition that all large streams flowing through a level country have to change their channel, would, perhaps, be difficult to ascertain; but, whatever may have been the

cause, the island now constitutes a principal object in one of the finest sylvan scenes I ever beheld. From a temple above Loonghee, that stands by the river side, on a commanding cliff whose summit overhangs its base, the eye is gratified by a most delightful combination of natural beauties: a fine sheet of water three miles in breadth, broken by an island more than a mile long, and half a mile wide, covered with trees of luxuriant foliage; eminences on the opposite shore, that rise from gently swelling grounds clothed in wood, to brown and rugged mountains, which, receding in an oblique direction, leave to the view a long and level plain; these all together form a landscape which I never saw equalled, and, perhaps, is not to be excelled. How much did I regret that my draftsman, though skilful in copying figures and

making botanical drawings, was unacquainted with landscape painting and perspective, and that not one of ourselves possessed any knowledge of that delightful art! Had Mr. Daniel, in his Oriental Travels, visited this part of the world, the view from Loonghee would have stood conspicuous among those faithful and excellent representations by which he has locally introduced India into England, and familiarized the European eye to the rich scenery of the East.

We continued at this charming place until the 2d of July, when the child of the Maywoon, notwithstanding the prescriptions of twenty doctors, was declared out of danger. So long as recovery continued doubtful, I sent the Hindoo Pundit every morning to enquire after his health: this attention was taken in good part, and the

Pundit obtained the honour of being introduced into the sick chamber, where he witnessed the most amiable demonstrations of parental tenderness: both the father and mother were kneeling by the side of the infant's bed, and attended on him themselves day and night. The disorder proved to be an inflammatory fever, and their treatment of it was perfectly simple: tea made of wild thyme, and decoctions of several vegetable productions, were the only medicines administered; the rest was left to nature, who accomplished her part. They did not, however, neglect to call in the aid of supernatural remedies; incantations were used and amulets applied, to the efficacy of which much was attributed. Whatever might have been the cause, the recovery of the child afforded very general satisfaction;

every body seemed to feel an interest in his fate.

We made several short excursions during our continuance at Loonghee: the country to the southward was well cultivated, and the fields inclosed by strong hedges of thorn; the soil is light and sandy, with many loose stones; the ground, for the most part, uneven, and rising into gentle acclivities. There were several neat villages within the distance of two or three miles; a deep ravine, formed by the monsoon rains, extended inland from the river, the banks of which were covered with stunted trees. Dr. Buchanan, in following its course, perceived in the sand the fresh tracks of a tiger, and prudently returned. On enquiring, I understood that the adjacent woods contained

many of these destructive beasts, who frequently at night come down the bed of the water-course to quench their thirst at the river. I went the next day with the Doctor and an armed party to the place, and plainly traced in the sand the footsteps of two tigers, a large and a small one; this discovery rendered us cautious of pursuing game into the forests. We found partridges, hares, quails, and wood pigeons, in the open fields; but the jungle-fowl, or wild poultry, kept close in the thick covers, where we heard the cocks crow, but did not dare to venture after them. We saw on the island, which is a very romantic spot, a few deer, and three buffaloes; the former were extremely wild; we fired at them without success, but were more fortunate in killing a number of pigeons of a beautiful plumage and excellent to eat.

The cattle used for tillage and draft in this part of the country are remarkably good; they put only a pair in the plough, which differs little from the plough of India, and turns up the soil very superficially. In their large carts they yoke four and often six: walking out one day, I met a waggon drawn by four stout oxen, going at a hand gallop, and driven by a country girl standing up in her vehicle, who seemed to manage the reins and a long whip with equal ease and dexterity: this was a novel sight to a person accustomed to the slow moving machines of India, in which the women are almost too timorous to ride, much less to attempt to guide.

The soil in the neighbourhood of Loonghee is very favourable for the cultivation of cotton; we saw many fields planted

with it, in which the shrub was growing strong and healthy. In one field a man was sowing sesamum: the light dry grains answer here better than rice, which thrives only in low and moist grounds.

My Portugueze servant Pauntchoo, whom I had dispatched along with a Birman in quest of fowls and kids, was absent for three days; a circumstance that gave rise to some uneasiness on his account, from the fear of his having been devoured by tigers: he, however, returned safe, and informed me that he had been to a town nine leagues distant, and in his way passed through several villages, and a country thickly inhabited. When he had concluded his bargain, he procured a small cart to carry his purchase to Loonghee, and could not prevail on the owner to accept of any thing more than a Cossem-

buzar silk handkerchief. All the manufactures of India are highly prized by the Birmans, although many articles are not at all superior to what they make themselves. Pauntchoo also reported, that there was a well-frequented road leading to the city of Tongho, which was distant fifteen days journey, the capital of a rich and populous province that bears the same name, and is governed by one of the King's sons, who takes his title from it, being called Tongho Teekien, or Prince of Tongho: he added, that its inhabitants excelled in the manufacture of cotton cloth, and their country produced the best beetle nut in the empire, a luxury in which Birmans of all ranks indulge so freely, that it is become with them almost a necessary of life. In one of Pauntchoo's expeditions across the river he met with a village inhabited by Kayns, a race

of mountaineers perfectly distinct from the Carianers, and speaking a language differing radically both from theirs and that of the Birmans. They were originally inhabitants of the Arracan mountains, whom the Birmans, since their conquest of that kingdom, have prevailed on, partly by force, and partly by mild treatment, to abandon their native hills, and settle on the plain. There are several small societies of these people established near the foot of the mountains farther north. The Carianers are not to be found higher up than the city of Prome.

Every thing was now in readiness for us to take our next departure, and the first of July was fixed upon to leave Loonghee. On the morning of the 29th of June we were surprised by an unexpected visit from the Portugueze Shawbunder

of Rangoon, who has already been mentioned as having been at Ummerapoora, the capital, at the time of our first arrival. He had been ordered down from court to meet the deputation, and came with all the pomp that his station would allow him to display; his barge was profusely decorated with colours, and his boatmen were dressed in uniform. On landing, he first paid his compliments to the Maywoon, and afterwards waited on me at my boat.

The appearance of this naturalized Portugueze was calculated rather to excite laughter than respect: he wore a long tunic of old velvet decorated with tarnished gold lace, and on his head a broad brimmed hat flapped, bound also with gold. He spoke the language of Hindostan imperfectly, but well enough to make

himself understood. After an awkward salutation, half in the Birman, half in the European manner, he informed me that he had been sent by an order from the Lotoo, or Grand Council, to meet the English deputation, and to acquaint me that his Majesty had been pleased to direct that three officers of distinguished rank should proceed to Pagahm-mew, a city seven days journey below Ummerapoora, to wait our arrival, and escort us to the capital. The King, he observed, had done me the extraordinary honour to send a royal barge for my personal accommodation, with two war-boats to tow it: this was considered as a flattering mark of his Majesty's good inclination, and we drew from it a favourable omen. To have our barge drawn by war-boats was an honorary privilege granted only to persons of the first consequence; it is grounded on

the idea, that it is inconsistent with the dignity of a man of high rank to be in the same boat with people of such mean condition as common watermen; it is a singular refinement, and furnishes an additional instance of the characteristic pride of the nation. The Shawbunder displayed great shrewdness in his conversation. He asked me several questions respecting the powers with which I was invested; and as the visit might in some degree be considered as official, I in part gratified his curiosity, by explaining in general terms the nature of the mission, and the capacity in which I expected to be received, without at all disclosing the specific objects I had in view.

CHAPTER X.

Leave Loonghee.—Extensive Island—Keendoo Praw—Meegheoung-yay, or Crocodile Town—Meein-yah—Patanagoh—Magway—Spanziek—strong Current—Hills clothed with Wood—Maynbu—Shoe-Lee-Rua, or Golden Boat Village—Gold the Type of Excellence—Yaynangheoum, or Petroleum Creek—petrified Wood—barren Country—Pengkioum—Sembewghewm—-Sillahmew—Manufactory of Silk—Crotolaria Juncea—Mountain of Poupa—Seenghoo—Bullock slain by a Tiger.- -Yoos, an ugly Race.—Temple of Logah-nundah.—City of Pagahm—-Neoundah—-Birman Deputies—Music—Dancing—beautiful Manufactory of lackered Ware.—Temple of Shoezeegoon—destructive Conflagration—numerous religious Buildings—gigantic Figure of the Divinity in a recumbent Posture—another Image erect—Oil Mills.

THE Shawbunder left Loonghee on the first of July, to announce our approach

to the Birman officers, who were already arrived at Pagahm: we postponed our departure until the following day, and at seven in the morning quitted this pleasing and rural place. In our journey we passed many towns and villages; sometimes we went swiftly through the water, at others we were stationary, and even lost ground, as the wind frequently subsided, and the stream was very rapid. The range of Arracan mountains appeared to recede westward; and about three o'clock we came to a large island formed by separate arms of the river; there was a pyramidical temple on it, called Keendoo Praw, and several smaller ones raised on a high terrace. I estimated the extent of the island to be two miles: at the upper end we crossed the river, and stopped a mile above Meegheoung-yay, at past seven in the evening.

Meegheoung-yay, or Crocodile Town, is a place of much trade and importance; there were not less than 100 large boats, and several smaller ones, lying at different stairs, which, my people said, were taking on board rice, onions, garlic, and oil, for the consumption of the capital. It stands on a very high bank, and has fewer religious buildings than any town we had seen of equal magnitude. Dr. Buchanan went on shore at daybreak, and observed in his walk some neat farms, each of them containing four or five cottages, better built than houses in towns usually are: they were fenced round with wide inclosures to receive the cattle, of which there was great abundance. The fields were divided by thorn hedges; the low grounds prepared for rice, and the higher planted with leguminous shrubs, or left for pasture.

Early on the 3d we passed Meeinyah: between that and Patanagoh, on the eastern shore, there was a sloping bank planted with indigo, which was then ripe, and the villagers were cutting it. Melloon, on the west side, seemed rich in temples, but the town was no way distinguished. Patanagoh had only one temple, which was splendidly gilded; it is a long straggling village, and every house had a comfortable garden, enclosed by a bamboo railing, with orchards of palmyra, plantain, and mango trees: here, likewise, were many boats of burthen waiting to receive a cargo. Numerous villages were scattered along the banks, which, as the wind blew strong, and we were obliged to keep in the middle of the river, there was no opportunity of examining. This day we passed some sandy islands, and brought to early in the even-

ing, on the eastern side, between the towns of Magway and Spanzeik. I took a walk before tea, and could discover little cultivation in the vicinity of the river: the land was stony, and covered with low thorn trees, in which we saw jungle-fowl, and other game. Herds of young cattle were grazing among the thickets: we crossed some cart roads, and met several peasants.

At daybreak next morning we set sail with a fair and steady wind, by the force of which the fleet stemmed a strong current. Low woody hills skirted the river, particularly on the eastern side; on the summits of some of these hills temples were raised; and one on the western bank, called Maynbu, appeared to be considerable. The river, except where it was interrupted by islands, could not be less

than two miles across. We passed a village named Shoe-Lee-Rua, or Golden-boat Village, from its being inhabited by watermen in the service of the King, whose boats, as well as every thing else belonging to the Sovereign, have always the addition of shoe, or golden, annexed to them; even his Majesty's person is never mentioned but in conjunction with this precious metal. When a subject means to affirm that the King has heard any thing, he says, "It has reached the golden ears;" he who has obtained admission to the royal presence, has been at the golden feet; the perfume of otta of roses, a nobleman observed one day, "was an odour grateful to the golden nose." Gold, among the Birmans, is the type of excellence: although highly valued, however, it is not used for coin in the country; it is employed sometimes in

in ornaments for the women, and in utensils and ear-rings for the men; but the greatest quantity is expended in gilding their temples, on which vast sums are continually lavished. The Birmans present the substance to their gods, and ascribe its qualities to their king.

After passing various sands and villages, we got to Yaynangheoum, or Earth-oil (Petroleum) Creek, about two hours past noon. The country now displayed an aspect differing from any we had yet seen; the surface was broken into small separate hills, entirely barren, and destitute of vegetation, except some stunted bushes that grew on the declivities, and in the dells, and a few unhealthy trees immediately in the neighbourhood of the villages: the clay was discoloured, and had the appearance of red ochre. We

were informed, that the celebrated wells of Petroleum, which supply the whole empire, and many parts of India, with that useful product, were five miles to the east of this place. The Seree brought me a piece of stone, which he assured me was petrified wood, and which certainly had much the appearance of it. In walking about, I picked up several lumps of the same, in which the grain of the wood was plainly discernible; it was hard, siliceous, and seemed composed of different lamina. The Birmans said it was the nature of the soil that caused this transmutation; and added, that the petrifying quality of the earth at this place was such, that leaves of trees shaken off by the wind were not unfrequently changed into stone before they could be decayed by time. The face of the country was altered, and the banks of the river were

totally barren; the ground was superficially covered with quartz-gravel, and concreted masses of the same material were thickly scattered. The mouth of the creek was crowded with large boats, waiting to receive a lading of oil; and immense pyramids of earthen jars were raised within and round the village, disposed in the same manner as shot and shells are piled in an arsenal. This place is inhabited only by potters, who carry on an extensive manufactory, and find full employment. The smell of the oil was extremely offensive; we saw several thousand jars filled with it ranged along the bank; some of these were continually breaking, and the contents, mingling with the sand, formed a very filthy consistence. Mr. Wood had the curiosity to walk to the wells; but, though I felt the same desire, I thought it prudent to

postpone visiting them until my return, when I was likely to have more leisure, and to be less the object of observation.

At seven in the morning, on the 5th of July, we left the neighbourhood of Earth-oil Wells. After passing Pengkioum, where a small river unites with the Irrawaddy, the face of the country resumed its verdant appearance, and the trees shot up with their usual vigour. The bed of the river, from bank to bank, was very wide; we judged it to be four miles; but the stream, being divided into different channels, formed low intermediate islands of sand, which are covered when the waters attain their utmost height. On the left we saw the town of Sembewghewn, whence there is a road that leads through the western hills into Arracan, which is accounted much the least difficult passage:

this is the place to which all Bengal articles of merchandize imported by way of Arracan are brought, and are here embarked on the Irrawaddy. Shortly after we saw a large town on the eastern side, with several neat temples; it was called Pakang-yay: lofty palmyra, the tamarind, and banyan trees, spread a pleasant shade around it; here also were some heavy trading boats. The western shore seemed rich and level; we brought to about six in the afternoon, a little below Sillahmew, a large town remarkable for its manufactories of silk. The fleet had not long been moored when the retail merchants flocked down to the water side to dispose of their wares: they carried in lackered boxes pieces of silken cloth, and of silk and cotton mixed, which they offered for sale at what I considered a very high price. I was asked fifteen tackal,

about £2. sterling, for a piece of moderate fineness, five yards long, and barely one yard wide: they were mostly woven in patterns adapted to the Birman dress. The silk, of which these goods are made, comes from Yunan, the south-west province of China: it is brought from Ummerapoora to this place in a raw state, and is returned in the web. The colours are bright and beautiful, but do not appear to be durable; the texture is close and strong; and it wears, as I was informed, much longer than any China or Indian manufacture.

Sillah-mew is a handsome town, shaded by wide spreading trees, and embellished with several temples. A smooth bank sloping to the river, and clothed with the finest verdure, adds much to its beauty. The soil in general is but poor; some

fields were regularly fenced, and cattle in large herds were grazing in the neighbourhood. Dr. Buchanan informed me that he saw the crotolaria juncea growing spontaneously, which would yield good hemp or flax.

On the sixth of July we made but little way; the current was violent, and the wind not strong enough to enable us to stem it: we were obliged to have recourse to poles, and were pushed forward with excessive labour by the boatmen; in one place where an island contracted the stream, we sent out an anchor a-head in a small cutter, and hauled on it by a hawser. The Arracan mountains appeared to the west, and a conspicuous hill, lofty, and of a conical form, called Poupa, was in sight to the eastward: a few villages,

and many temples, skirted the banks. In the afternoon the fleet made fast to the eastern shore; there was neither town nor village nigh; it was about four miles below Seenghoo; and though we saw little cultivation, there were several herds of cattle. Dr. Buchanan, whose ardour for botanical researches often made me apprehensive for his safety, in wandering through the thickets in quest of plants, heard the report of a musket at a distance; on his approach to the spot, he found some peasants about to skin a bullock that had just been killed by a tiger: the shot had caused the animal to abandon his prey, and in its retreat it most fortunately took another way from that which the Doctor came. This was not the only time that his thirst after knowledge, and reliance upon his gun, led him into danger. A

musket is a very precarious defence against the sudden assault of the most ferocious and terrible of all animals.

Whilst we were at tea, the Seree informed us, that further on there is a small river which enters the Irrawaddy, at a place called Yoo-wa, and that two days journey up this river is a large town called Yoo-miou; he observed also, that an extensive tract of country is inhabited by a people called Yoo, whom he represented as exceedingly ugly, having protuberant bellies and white teeth. The Birmans, it is to be observed, both men and women, colour their teeth, their eyelashes, and the edges of their eyelids, with black *.

* This custom is not confined to the Birmans, particularly the operation of colouring the eyelashes; the women of Hindostan and Persia commonly practise it; they deem it beneficial, as well as becoming. The

The Yoos are subjects of the Birman state, and observe the same religious worship; they speak the language of Tavay, which is nothing more than a provincial dialect of the Birman tongue.

We left our nightly station at the customary hour, and, favoured by a fair breeze, sailed through a country diversified by small barren-hills, on which there was little vegetation, and by green fertile valleys, cultivated, and laid out in farms. The petrifactions, like those we found at Yaynangheoum, were frequent here: indigo was growing in one of the valleys. About twelve o'clock we came to a rocky point that projected far into the river, round which the current set with such excessive rapidity, that our boats were a long

collyrium they use is called Surma, the Persian name of antimony.

time in getting past, and did not at length effect it without difficulty and some danger. The Maywoon obligingly sent his war-boats to our assistance. After we had surmounted this impediment, we came to a green level bank, where there was a wide range of pasturage, and many cattle feeding. Seenghoo is a large town; in its neighbourhood, and for a great distance along the eastern bank, small temples were built close to the river. We did not make much way in this day's journey, although our labour was great. In the evening we brought-to near Keahoh, a poor village, where the inhabitants get their livelihood by extracting molasses from the palmyra tree, of which they make tolerably good sugar.

Although the soil near the river is in most places unproductive and barren, yet,

as we advanced northwards on the following day, population increased. Every little hill and rising ground was crowned with a temple; that of Logah-nunda is distinguished for its superior size; it is a clumsy inelegant mass of building, elevated on a semicircular terrace; the base is painted with different colours, and the cupola is richly gilded.

Leaving the temple of Logah-nundah, we approached the once magnificent city of Pagahm. We could see little more from the river than a few straggling houses, which bore the appearance of having once been a connected street: in fact, scarcely any thing remains of ancient Pagahm, except its numerous mouldering temples, and the vestiges of an old brick fort, the ramparts of which are still to be traced. The town of Neoundah,

about four miles to the north, which may be called a continuation of Pagahm, has flourished in proportion as the latter has decayed. We passed a small river named, in the days of splendour, Shoe-kiaung, or the Golden Stream: here we spent a night, rendered unpleasant by the stormy weather.

We reached Neoundah early on the 9th of July. At this place the deputation from the capital, of which I had been apprized by the Shawbunder, was waiting my arrival. The Seree informed me, that a temporary house, which I saw on a clear piece of ground about 100 yards from the brink, had been erected as a compliment to me; it was much larger than that which the Maywoon had prepared at Meeaday. Early in the afternoon I left my boat, and was received at

the house by the Birman officers with every formal testimony of respect; on a part of the floor elevated a few inches, a carpet was spread, on which I took my seat. The principal person of the deputation was a Woondock, or junior counsellor of state; the others were the governor of a district called Miengdong north of Ava, the governor of Pein-keing bordering on China, and the commandant of the Siamese guards. The Woondock was a lively man, about forty-five years old; the rest appeared of more advanced age, not less than sixty-five or seventy: they all wore the tsaloe, or chain of nobility. The Woondock, though from his station he had precedence of the rest, yet was not of such high rank as the two governors. The utmost decorum was preserved at this meeting; the Woondock spoke in the name of the others, and Baba-

Sheen interpreted in the language of Hindostan. After pompously expatiating upon the honour which his Birman majesty had been pleased to confer on me, by sending a deputation to welcome me, and a barge with war-boats to tow it, he asked some trivial questions, and offered his services to procure whatever we stood in need of. Having discoursed for a short time, a band of music and a company of dancing girls were introduced; drums, gongs, the Indian syrinda, or guitar, the Birman harp and fiddle, with loud and harsh clarionets, almost deafened us with their noise. Among the dancers, one girl much excelled her companions in symmetry of form and elegance of movement; she was richly dressed, and in shewing the modes of dancing practised in different countries, displayed a fine person to great advantage. The manner of Cassay is

most consonant to the English taste, in which the time varies suddenly from quick to slow. The entertainment, however, seemed entirely lost upon the elders, who sat in solemn insensibility, chewing their beetle nut, and regarding with profound gravity the voluptuous attitudes of a very beautiful woman. The amusement did not end till past nine o'clock. I directed a few pieces of silver to be distributed among the musicians and dancers. The Birman officers retired without ceremony, and we passed the night on board our respective boats.

The next morning I was again visited in form, with the additional honour of the company of the Maywoon of Pegue, a compliment which, either from pride or policy, he had never before condescended to pay; the Woondock, however, was

here his superior. We conversed for an hour on indifferent subjects, and the Maywoon informed his friends that Dr. Buchanan was a botanist, and had made several drawings of plants. On a wish being expressed to see them, the Doctor obligingly gratified their curiosity with a sight of some that had been executed by the Bengal painter, under his own inspection; these were instantly recognized by the Birmans, who mentioned the names of the originals: they are themselves fond of vegetable productions, which they use very generally in medicine. About eleven o'clock the assembly broke up, and it was settled that we should pursue our journey on the following day.

The remaining time was spent in viewing as much of this once flourishing city as the shortness of our stay would admit.

On entering the town, we came into a long, narrow, winding street, about thirty feet wide; the houses were built of bamboo, and raised from the ground: this street was full of shops, containing no other articles than lackered ware: boxes, trays, cups, &c. varnished in a very neat manner, were displayed in the front of the shops; they were of various colours; some had figures painted on them, others wreaths of flowers. Leaving this street, we crossed a water-course on a good wooden bridge, and came to the bazar, or provision market: the green-stalls seemed to be well provided with rice, pulse, greens, garlic, onions, and fruit; there were also fresh-fish, Gnapee, and dead lizards, which latter the Birmans account a delicacy; but there was not any meat. In our progress, we passed over another bridge, and saw several

streets running in parallel lines; some of these were inhabited by carriers, whose cattle were feeding on rice straw round their houses. Having reached the extremity of the town in this direction, we came upon a well paved road, that led to the great temple named Shoezeegoon, to which we proceeded. On each side of the road there was a range of small temples, neglected and in ruins: the kioums, or monasteries, were in good repair, and we saw some handsome houses for the accommodation of strangers. Shoezeegoon is neither so large nor so well built as the temples at Rangoon or Pegue; the height does not exceed 150 feet: it is surrounded by a spacious area paved with broad flags, on which there are a number of lesser buildings, profusely gilded, and laboriously carved. A staircase on the outside leads up to a gallery, about a third of the

height of the principal temple, whence we had an extensive prospect of the country, which appeared to be exceedingly unproductive and barren: the ruins of innumerable religious buildings were to be seen in every direction, which cover a space of ground not less than six or seven miles along the river, and three miles inland. Pagahm is said to have been the residence of forty-five successive monarchs, and was abandoned 500 years ago in consequence of a divine admonition: whatever may be its true history, it certainly was once a place of no ordinary splendour. Returning by a different way, we walked through an alley occupied by blacksmiths' shops, furnished with bill-hooks, spike-nails, adzes, &c. A little farther on we saw the ruins of a street that had been consumed by fire only two days before: from seventy to eighty houses

were destroyed by the conflagration. It was the Tackally, and the sufferers were the already wretched, the miserable public prostitutes.

In the afternoon I directed my walk southward, and was much surprised at the number of religious edifices I beheld. They differ in structure from those which we had seen in the lower provinces; instead of a slender spire rising to a great height from an expanded base, the temples of Pagahm, in general, carry up a heavy breadth to very near the top, and then come abruptly to a point, which gives a clumsy appearance to the buildings. Many of the most ancient temples at this place are not solid at the bottom; a well arched dome supports a ponderous superstructure; within, an image of Gaudma sits enshrined; four Gothic doorways open

into the dome: in one of these I saw a human figure standing erect, which the Seree* told me was Gaudma; and another of the same personage, lying on his right side asleep, both of gigantic stature. The divinity, however, is rarely to be found in these attitudes; the posture in which he is generally depictured, is sitting cross-legged on a pedestal, adorned with representations of the leaf of the sacred lotus carved upon the base; the left hand of the image rests upon his lap, and the right is pendent. Passing through the suburbs, we came to a part where the inhabitants were employed in expressing oil from the sesamum seed; the grain is

* I suspect the authenticity of my information on this point, which, I imagine, proceeded from ignorance in the Seree. Of these figures, which he called Gaudma, I conceive the one erect to be the Hindoo Ananda, the other, Nà-rà-yàn, sleeping on the waters.

put into a deep wooden trough, in which it is pressed by an upright timber fixed in a frame; the force is increased by a long lever, on the extremity of which a man sits and guides a bullock that moves in a circle, thus turning and pressing the seed at the same time: the machine was simple, and answered the purpose effectually. There were not less than 200 of those mills within a narrow compass. From the circumstance of the cattle being in good order, we concluded that they were fed on the seed after the oil was extracted. The land about Pagahm scarcely yields sufficient vegetation to nourish goats.

CHAPTER XI.

Embark on board the royal Barge——leave Pagahm — singular Caves—Birman Hermits.—Pass Sirraykioum — Gnerroutoh— Country populous. — Shwayedong — Keonzeec—Toucheec—Læpac, or pickled Tea— Kiouptaun, or Line of Rocks—Tanoundain —Tirroup-mew, or Chinese Town.—The Keenduem a large river—Cassay Boatmen ——Yaudaboo——Manufactory of earthen Ware——Summeikioum—Manufactory of Salt-petre, and Gunpowder.—Gnameaghee —Tobacco Plantations.—Sandaht, or Elephant Village—Meahmoo—Yapadain—the Shawbunder returns.—Kiouptaloun——periodical Risings of the River—ancient Ava —Description of it—Temple of Shoegunga Praw.—Beautiful Situation of Chagain.— Appearance of Ummerapoora, the Capital— Tounzemahn—spacious Lake—Residence of

the British Deputation, and Reception on our landing.

At nine o'clock in the morning of the 11th of July I took possession of the royal barge with ceremonious formality, accompanied by the Woondock and Baba-Sheen. The platform on the outside contained space for thirty-two rowers, sixteen on each side; but on this occasion the oars were not fastened, as it was meant to be drawn by war-boats: the inside was divided into three small apartments, handsomely fitted up; the roof and sides were lined with white cotton, and the floor covered with carpets and fine mats. I proceeded in this barge till one o'clock, and then returned to my own boat, which was a much more convenient, though less dignified conveyance.

After leaving Neoundah the eastern

bank of the river rises to a perpendicular height, eighty or one hundred feet above the river. In the side of the cliff, rather more than half way up, we saw some apertures resembling doorways, and were told that they were entrances into caves which had formerly been inhabited by hermits, who, desirous of withdrawing from the world, had excavated these abodes with their own hands, and dwelt in them for the remainder of their lives, preserving no farther intercourse with their fellow creatures, than what was necessary to receive their food, which was lowered down to them by a rope. The Birmans do not inflict on themselves disgustful tortures after the manner of the Hindoos, but they deem it meritorious to mortify the flesh by the voluntary penance of abstemiousness and self-denial. Solitary seclusion has, at some period or

other, been accounted praiseworthy in most countries: during the reign of monkish superstition, it prevailed very commonly throughout Europe: our legendary tales are not wholly unfounded: the Hermit of Warkworth is said to have had its origin from a fact. Birmans, however, though bigoted, are not gloomy, and are in general blessed with a disposition too cheerful to retire from the world in hopeless despondency, or sullen discontent.

Our journey this day was slow, and we perceived little that differed from what has already been described: the islands formed by the river were long, and succeeded each other with such small intervals, that the full breadth of the river, from bank to bank, seldom could be seen; we judged it to be in most

places three miles wide: our boats kept near the eastern shore, and passed, on that side, the towns of Sirraykioum and Gnerroutoh. During the latter part of the day, the country seemed fertile, and the soil richer than in the neighbourhood of Pagahm; the number of inhabitants and cattle denoted a considerable population. In the evening we brought to near Shwayedong, a small but neat town, containing about 300 houses ranged in a regular street; each dwelling had a small garden, fenced with a bamboo railing. Two monasteries and a few small temples did not claim particular notice, but the tall and wide-spreading trees that overshadowed them were objects of pleasing contemplation.

On the next day, July 12th, we continued our journey, sometimes going fast,

at others slow and with difficulty, as the wind favoured us, the reaches of the river winding so much that we had it on all quarters. Keozee, on the eastern side, was the place of most consequence, and was ornamented with several neat temples. At half past five in the evening I went on shore, and found the adjacent country divided into fields, which, at a proper season, are cultivated ; the remains of a tobacco plantation, that had produced a crop in the former year, were yet lying on the ground: detached hills appeared to the eastward. We brought to, and spent the night near a small village called Toucheac, to the north of Yebbay. Here the inhabitants get their livelihood by selling Læpac, or pickled tea-leaf, of which the Birmans are extremely fond. The plant, I was informed, grows at a place called Palong-miou, a district to the

north-east of Ummerapoora; it is very inferior to the tea produced in China, and is seldom used but as a pickle.

On the following day we kept close to the eastern shore, and, the breadth of the river being in most places from three to five miles, it was not easy minutely to distinguish objects on the western bank. The country, as we advanced north, increased in population, and improved in agriculture; the land every where indicated a deficiency of rain, being parched, and broken into deep fissures, owing to the want of moisture. We understood that the season had been remarkably dry; rain, however, was shortly expected. The river, notwithstanding the failure of the monsoon, continued to rise. We passed, on the eastern side, Kiouptaun, or the Line of Rocks, Tanoundain, a respect-

able town, with several other towns and villages. In the evening we brought-to at an island opposite Tirroup-mew, or Chinese City: there is a small district that bears the same name, called so in commemoration of a victory gained here over an army of Chinese that invaded the Birman empire some centuries ago, at the period when Pagahm was the seat of government; whence it appears, that the Chinese have long considered this kingdom as a desirable conquest, and have made more than one fruitless attempt to accomplish its subjection.

The next day we stopped five miles above Tirroup-mew, where the Keenduem mingles its waters with those of the Irrawaddy: this great river comes from the north-west, and divides the country of Cassay from that of Ava. The

Birmans say, that it has its source in a lake three months journey to the northward; it is navigable, as far as the Birman territories extend, for vessels of burthen. An intelligent man belonging to Dr. Buchanan's boat informed him, that the most distant town in the possession of the Birmans on the Keenduem, was named Nakioung, and the first Shaan town* was called Thangdat. The entrance of the Keenduem seemed somewhat less than a mile wide: the Irrawaddy, immediately above the junction, became much narrower; but I imagine a stream was concealed, and that what appeared to

* Shaan, or Shan, is a very comprehensive term given to different nations, some independent, others the subjects of the greater states: thus the Birmans frequently mention the Melap-Shaan, or Shaan subject to the Birmans; the Yoodra-Shaan, subject to the Siamese; the Cassay-Shaan, to the Cassayers.

to be the limits of the river was the bank of an island formed by another branch.

In the men who rowed the war-boats that accompanied the barge from Ummerapoora, I had remarked features differing much from the other boatmen, and a softness of countenance that resembled more the Bengal than the Birman character of face; on enquiry, I learned that they were Cassayers, or the sons of Cassayers, who had been brought away from their native country, at times when the Birmans carried their predatory incursions across the Keenduem. Eastern invaders, who do not intend to occupy the territories they over-run, usually adopt the policy of conveying away the inhabitants, particularly children, whom they establish within their own dominions, and thus acquire additional strength by

augmenting the number of their subjects. This has been a practice of Asiatic warfare from time immemorial: the last contest of the English with Hyder Ally depopulated the Carnatic. Children, until they attain a certain age, may be transplanted with safety, and will assimilate to any soil; but after arriving at the years of maturity, the most lenient treatment will hardly reconcile the human mind to coercive detention in a foreign country. The spot where a person has passed the tender years of life, the long remembered and impressive interval between infancy and manhood, be it where it may, is ever dear to him. I should willingly have conversed with the Cassay boat people respecting their nation, but my situation forbad me either to gratify my own curiosity, or sanction the enquiries of others.

At ten o'clock we reached the town of Yandaboo, remarkable for its manufactories of earthen ware; and in the course of the day we passed many towns and villages, on each side, agreeably shaded by trees, particularly by the palmyra and the tamarind. Early in the evening we brought-to in a creek which leads up to a large town named Summeikioum: after dinner Dr. Buchanan and myself took a walk along the margin of the creek, which carried us to the town by a wide circuit: we found the houses, though numerous, mean, and very irregularly built; the grounds in the neighbourhood were embanked for the cultivation of rice. The soil appeared to be good, but the inhabitants expressed the utmost anxiety on the subject of rain; not a drop had yet fallen here, although, in the common course of seasons, the

monsoon should have commenced three weeks earlier. The poor people were carefully husbanding their rice straw for the support of their cattle, large herds of which were endeavouring to pick up a subsistence from the parched blades of grass, in fields that were covered with dust instead of verdure. The appearance of these animals bespoke excessive poverty, if not actual famine.

At Summei-kioum there is the greatest manufactory of saltpetre and gunpowder in the kingdom: here also is prepared the gunpowder that is required for the royal magazines; it is the sole occupation of the inhabitants. Neither saltpetre nor gunpowder are suffered to be exported under any plea, nor can the smallest quantity be sold without a special license from some man in power.

Early in the morning we left the neighbourhood of gunpowder and salt-petre: temples and villages lined the banks so thickly that it would be tedious to enumerate them. At nine o'clock we stopped at Gnameaghee, celebrated for producing the best tobacco in the Birman empire; many brick kilns were on fire, preparing materials for building temples, of which there appeared to be already a sufficient number. Pursuing our journey, we passed numerous islands; some of them were cultivated, and had houses, inhabitants, and trees. Towards evening the wind suddenly rose to a storm; Mr. Wood and myself reached Sandaht, or Elephant Village; Dr. Buchanan's boat could not make head against wind and stream, and dropped an anchor; perceiving his situation, I dispatched one of the war-boats to his aid, when the united

efforts of both crews soon brought him in safety to the fleet. Sandaht is a small town, which, together with the lands adjacent, is occupied entirely by the elephant-keepers belonging to the royal stables. The King is the sole proprietor of all the elephants in his dominions, and the privilege to ride on, or keep one of these animals, is an honour granted only to men of the very first rank and consequence: his Birman majesty is said to possess 6000. In India, female elephants are prized beyond males, on account of their being more tractable: but in Ava it is the reverse; females are never used on state occasions, and seldom for ordinary riding, which causes the other sex to be of much higher value: it rarely happens however that either one or the other is to be purchased; the King's exclusive right, and the limited use that is

made of them, prevent their becoming an article of common sale.

We set out at an early hour next morning; Meahmoo, on the western side, appeared from the water to be a large town, shaded by groves of palmyra trees; it is remarkable for a manufactory of coarse chequered cotton cloth, such as is worn by the lower class of people. Yapadain, a town on the eastern side, was distinguished by several temples, and a handsome monastery. About twelve o'clock the Shawbunder, who, after the interview at Loonghee, had returned to Ava, again met us; he had travelled with great expedition, having been at court, and made his report: the present visit was a spontaneous act of civility; he possessed a small jaghire, or personal estate, in the neighbourhood, where

he had prepared some refreshments, of which he requested I would stop to partake. I complied with his desire, and accompanied him to a bower formed in a clump of bamboos on the bank of the river, and shaded from the sun by an artificial awning of grass: here we found a profusion of fruits, milk, butter, and preserves, in dishes laid out on carpets; a company of dancing girls and musicians from a neighbouring village entertained us with their music and graces. I remained as short a time as was consistent with civility, and then pursued my voyage. We passed in our progress several populous villages pleasantly situated, and adorned with well enclosed gardens and orchards of plantain, guava, and other fruit trees. At night we brought-to at Kiouptaloum, where a large temple, surrounded by several small buildings,

was the only object that merited particular attention.

Next day we got under way at the customary hour, and made but slow progress, the wind heading us so far that the square sails of the Birman boats could not keep full; oars and poles were plyed with vigour. The river, which, though it had not yet risen to its utmost periodical height, had overflowed its banks, filled all the water-courses, and inundated the low grounds adjacent to its bed. As the force of the current lay in the middle of the stream, in order to avoid its influence we frequently navigated through fields, in which the tall grass and reeds appeared above the surface of the water, and the trees had their stems immersed beneath the flood. The swelling of the Irrawaddy is not influenced by the quan-

tity of rain which falls in the vallies, but by the torrents that rush down from the mountains. Notwithstanding the drought in the champaign country had been greater this year than usual, the river was swollen to its regular height, which, I was informed, it rarely fell short of, or exceeded: indeed, this part of the country is seldom refreshed by copious rains, but, like Egypt, depends on the overflowing of its river to fertilize the soil. The Irrawaddy, during the monsoon months, rises and subsides three or four times. As our distance from Ummerapoora diminished, towns and villages on each side recurred at such short intervals, that it was in vain to enquire the name of each distinct assemblage of houses; each, however, had its name, and was for the most part inhabited by one particular class of people, professing some separate trade, or follow-

ing some peculiar occupation. We were shewn a tomb erected to the memory of a person of high distinction, who had been accidentally drowned near that place fifteen years before; it was an oblong brick building, one story high, with eight or nine doors opening towards the river. Many beautiful temples and kioums would have engaged our attention, had we not already seen such numbers, and been assured that all we had viewed fell far short of those which we should have an opportunity of beholding at the capital. We brought-to late in the evening, at the lower landing place of what was once the city of Ava, and the metropolis of all the Birman empire.

In the morning I took a hasty view of Aungwa, or Ava; it is divided into an upper and lower city, both of which are

fortified: the lower, which is the most extensive, I judged to be about four miles in circumference; it is protected by a wall thirty feet high, at the foot of which there is a deep and broad fosse. The communication between the fort and the country is over a mound of earth crossing the ditch, that supports a causeway; an embankment of earth in the inside sustains the wall; the upper or smaller fort, which may be called the citadel, and does not exceed a mile in circuit, was much stronger, and more compact than the lower; but neither the upper nor the lower had a ditch on the side of the river. The walls are now mouldering into decay; ivy clings to the sides, and bushes, suffered to grow at the bottom, undermine the foundation, and have already caused large chasms in the different faces of the fort. The materials of the houses, con-

sisting chiefly of wood, had, on the first order for removing, been transported to the new city of Ummerapoora: but the ground, unless where it is covered with bushes, or rank grass, still retains traces of former buildings and streets. The lines of the royal palace, of the Lotoo, or grand council hall, the apartments of the women, and the spot on which the Piasath, or imperial spire, had stood, were pointed out to us by our guide. Clumps of bamboos, a few plantain trees, and tall thorns, occupy the greater part of the area of this lately flourishing capital. We observed two dwelling houses of brick and mortar, the roofs of which had fallen in; these, our guide said, had belonged to Colars, or foreigners: on entering one, we found it inhabited only by bats, which flew in our faces, whilst our sense of smelling was offended by their filth, and by the

noisome mildew that hung upon the walls. Numerous temples, on which the Birmans never lay sacrilegious hands, were dilapidating by time. It is impossible to draw a more striking picture of desolation and ruin.

Among the religious buildings within the fort, one named Shoegunga Praw, noways distinguished for size or splendour, was in former times held peculiarly sacred, and is still reverenced above the rest. At the present day, when an officer of rank is about to enter on a great public trust, or a new commander is appointed to the army, the oath of allegiance is administered in this temple with great solemnity, a breach of which is considered the most heinous crime that a Birman can be guilty of, and is invariably punished by the severest tortures. How Shoegunga obtained

this distinction I was not able to learn. We were informed, that a temple of much greater magnitude, named Logatherpoo Praw, stood a short distance to the westward of the fort, in which was a colossal figure of Gaudma, formed out of a solid block of marble. This temple and image we had a better opportunity of viewing on our return.

Leaving Ava in our rear, the river bends again to the northward, when the opposite city of Chagain, and the spires, the turrets, and the lofty Piasath of Ummerapoora, create an unexpected pleasure, and exhibit a fine contrast to the gloomy and deserted walls of Ava. Chagain, on the north side, once too the seat of imperial residence, is situated partly at the foot, and partly on the side, of a rugged hill that is broken into separate eminences,

and on the summit of each stands a spiral temple; these temples, rising irregularly one above another to the top of the mountain, form a beautiful assemblage of objects, the effect of which is increased by their being carefully whitewashed and kept in repair. As we sailed near the opposite shore, the sun shone full upon the hill, and its reflected rays displayed the scenery to the highest advantage; in addition to this, the swollen state of the river gave to the waters the semblance of a vast lake, interspersed with islands, in which the foundations of Ummerapoora seemed to be immersed. Numberless boats were passing up and down, and the houses on the western, or rather southern shore, appeared, from their uninterrupted succession, to be a continued town, or the suburbs of a city.

At twelve o'clock we came to the mouth of the channel that communicates with the lake of Tounzemahn, through which it receives its waters from the river. The situation of Ummerapoora has already been described; the southern face of the fort is washed, during the rainy season, by the waves of the lake, and the houses of the city and suburbs extend along the bank as far as the extreme point of land. Across the lake, and opposite to the fort, stands the small village of Tounzemahn, near which, in a tall grove of mango, palmyra, and cocoa-nut trees, a dwelling was prepared for the British deputation. On entering the lake, the number of boats that were moored, as in a harbour, to avoid the influence of the sweeping flood, the singularity of their construction, the height of the waters, which threaten inundation to the whole city, and the am-

phitheatre of lofty hills that nearly surrounded us, altogether presented a novel scene, exceedingly interesting to a stranger. We rowed towards the grove, whilst the greater part of the fleet went to the opposite side: on reaching the bank, I perceived a war-boat belonging to the Maywoon of Pegue, who, I understood, was at the grove waiting our arrival. I was received on landing by Baba-Sheen, and some inferior officers; they accompanied me to the house, which was situated about 300 yards from the brink of the lake, overshadowed by lofty trees, that completely defended it from the meridian sun. When we came to the entrance of the virando, or balcony, the Maywoon of Pegue, the Governor of Bamoo, a province bordering on China, and the Woondock before mentioned, welcomed me to the capital. Being seated on carpets

spread along the floor, the conversation turned on general topics, and particularly on European geography, a subject on which the Governor of Bamoo appeared very desirous of information. After some time, the Woondock, addressing himself to me, said, that his Birman majesty had been absent a few months, at a country residence named Meengoung, where he was erecting a magnificent temple to their divinity Gaudma, but was expected to return soon to Ummerapoora; that, in the mean time, instructions had been given to his ministers to provide every thing requisite for the accommodation of the English gentlemen, and that Baba-Sheen was commanded to reside near us, in order to supply our wants, and to communicate our wishes: to this the Maywoon of Pegue added, that the two inferior Serees, or provincial under secret-

taries, who had accompanied us from Rangoon, were likewise directed to attend to our orders, and, being persons to whom we were accustomed, would probably be more agreeable to us than entire strangers.

These polite and hospitable attentions were received and acknowledged by me with real satisfaction; nor was it at all diminished by the freedom with which the Woondock informed me, that it was contrary to the etiquette of the Birman court, for a public minister from a foreign nation to go abroad before his first audience. He therefore hoped I would not cross the lake in person, or suffer any of my people to do so, until the ceremonials were past; but as our customs differed from theirs, and the Europeans habituated themselves to take exercise, I was at full liberty to walk or ride into the country,

or over the plains that lay between our dwelling and the hills, as far as I thought proper; recommending to me, at the same time, not to go to any great distance, as it would be considered by the common people in the light of a derogation from my own consequence. I thanked him for his counsel, which was delivered with many expressions of civility, and readily acquiesced in what he assured me was an established custom.

This usage of debarring a public minister from entering the capital previous to his first formal presentation, I understood, was neither recent nor uncommon; it has long been the known practice of the Birman and Siamese governments; Monsieur Loubere makes mention of it in his Account of an Embassy to Siam, sent from the court of Louis the Four-

teenth. It is founded on that cautious policy which governs all nations eastward of India in their intercourse with foreign states.

CHAPTER XII.

Place of Residence described.—Deputation from China provincial—not imperial.—Rhoom, a Building sometimes attached to private Houses—Reason of it.—Munificence of the Birman Government.—Letter from General Erskine—opened by the Birman Minister—Apology.—Appearance of the adjacent Country—parched for Want of Rain.—Cassay Farmers—Women industrious—row the Boats—fond of singing.—Chinese Music discordant and troublesome—Indolence of the Chinese.—King returns to the Capital.—Eclipse of the Moon.—Reason of Delay—Pride of the Court—its Punctiliousness—Letter from the Governor General translated—present a Memorial—Embassies usually consist of three Members.—Visit from the junior Deputies from China—whimsical Ceremony.—Return the Visit—Subject of Conversation.

As soon as my visitors took their leave, I made a survey of our new habitation;

it was a spacious house of one story, raised from the ground somewhat more than two feet, and better covered than Birman houses usually are: it consisted of two good sized rooms, and a large virando, or balcony; the partitions and walls were made of cane mats, with latticed windows in the sides; the shape of the roof was such as distinguishes the houses of nobles: it was altogether a comfortable habitation, and well adapted to the climate. Mr. Wood had a smaller house, erected behind mine, and parallel to it; and Dr. Buchanan another at right angles. Small separate huts were constructed for the guard, and for our attendants; the whole was surrounded by a strong bamboo paling, which inclosed a court-yard. There were two entrances by gates, one in front of my house, the other backwards; at each of these, on the outside

of the paling, was a shed, in which a Birman guard was posted, to protect us from thieves, keep off the populace, and probably to watch and report our movements.

On the skirts of the same grove, in a line with our dwelling, similar houses were erected for three Chinese deputies, who had arrived at Ummerapoora about two months before us: these personages were represented as composing a royal mission from the imperial city of Pekin; but circumstances early led me to suspect that their real character did not rise higher than that of a provincial deputation from Manchegee, or Yunan, the south-west province of China, which borders on the kingdom of Ava: a conjecture that was afterwards confirmed. They had accompanied the Governor of Bamoo, which is

the frontier province, to the capital; and I understood that their business was to adjust some mercantile concerns relating to the jee, or mart, where the commodities of the two empires are brought and bartered. It was not at all improbable, that the mission had been sanctioned by the authority of the Emperor of China, especially as the principal member of it was a native of Pekin, and had lately come from thence: but the false pride of the Birman court suggested the puerile*

* The Chinese seem to have been actuated by a policy equally absurd, when they informed Sir George Staunton, at the time of the formal introduction of Lord Macartney, that " Ambassadors from Pegue" were present; and that "Siam, Ava, and Pegue were tributary to China:" such unworthy deceptions, not being expected, could hardly be guarded against. The courts of Ava and Pekin appear to resemble each other in many points; but in none more than in their vanity, which often manifests itself in a manner not less ridiculous than contemptible.

expedient of representing it to us as an imperial embassy; a distinction to which, I was privately informed from an authentic source, it possessed no pretensions whatever. The members, however, were treated apparently with much personal respect and attention.

The building denominated Rhoom has already been described as the official hall of justice, where the members of provincial governments, and all municipal officers, are accustomed to assemble for the transaction of public business. Every man of high rank in the Birman empire is a magistrate, and has a place of this description and name contiguous to his dwelling; but always on the outside of the enclosure of his court-yard, and not surrounded by any fence or railing, in order to manifest publicity, and shew that it is

the seat of majesty and justice, to which all mankind may have free access. An imperial mandate to a governor, or an order from a governor to a petty miougee, or chief of a small town or district, is invariably opened and read aloud in this sanctified hall. The Birman government, in the administration of public affairs, suffers no such thing as privacy or concealment. The rhoom is likewise an appendage of dignity, as it denotes him to whose habitation it is annexed to be a person of rank and consequence: a building of this sort was erected within a few yards of the front gate of our inclosure.

For two days after our landing, the boatmen and servants were employed in transporting our baggage from the boats to the house, and our time was chiefly taken up in arranging the domestic eco-

nomy of our new residence, in which we found a liberal provision of all such necessaries as the natives themselves require; my rooms were carpeted, but the chairs, tables, &c. were my own. Rice, gee (clarified butter), firewood, and pots for dressing victuals, were supplied to our people in abundance. A few stalls, or petty shops, were established in the grove, to afford the smaller ingredients of cookery, such as greens, spices, salt, tamarinds, &c. Here also tobacco and beetle leaf were sold; and to enable our attendants to purchase such articles, one hundred tackal, about £. 12 sterling, were distributed amongst them: this was an act of munificence which I with great difficulty avoided the obligation of, in my own person; but no remonstrance could prevail on the Birman officer to dispense with it in the instance of our domestics.

The delinquent refugees, of whom mention has been made in a former part of this work as having been surrendered, by order of the Governor-General, to the justice of their country, had reached Ummerapoora some weeks previous to our arrival. The Birman guard that escorted them had brought a letter directed to me from General Erskine, the English commander at Chittigong; this letter the Birman minister, as it was alleged, through mistake, but more probably by design, caused to be opened, and procured a translation from an Armenian interpreter. The circumstance was reported to the King, who ordered that the letter should be safely deposited in the Lotoo, and given to me on my arrival: the royal injunctions were punctually obeyed; an officer, in his dress of ceremony, brought it over. A proposal was first made, that I

should go myself to the rhoom, solicit its restoration, receive it as an act of grace, and do homage to the King, by bowing with my face towards the palace. From this I entirely dissented, as the cause of complaint was with me, and confidence had in some measure been violated by their breaking the seal. I do not imagine that the proposition originated from any authority, as it was immediately given up, and the letter, in a silk wrapper, was formally presented to me on a tray, by the officer who conveyed it across the lake.

Being now comfortably lodged, we had leisure to take a view of the circumjacent country, and observe the objects that immediately surrounded us. Behind the grove in which we lived was a smooth extensive plain, intersected by the em-

bankments of what, in the past year, had been fields of rice, but which promised, this season, to be an unproductive waste, owing to the uncommon drought: notwithstanding the spot we were on was elevated very little above the present level of the lake, which had now nearly reached its utmost height, yet the ground was parched up, and divided into chasms from want of moisture. Dark and rugged mountains, about eight miles distant, bounded the prospect to the south-west: several small villages were scattered over the plain, and on the skirts of the grove, inhabited, as we were informed, by native Cassayers, or the descendents of Cassayers, who had been carried into captivity by the Birman invaders during their predatory expeditions across the Keenduem.

The Seree who accompanied me said,

that these people, whom he called Munniporeans, from Munnipore, the capital of Cassay, were in general become reconciled to their state of servitude, owing to their having been brought away very young from their own country: the superior industry and skill which they possess over the Birmans in different branches of handicraft, supplied them with a comfortable subsistence. Those in our neighbourhood were farmers and gardeners, who cultivated pulse, greens, onions, and such vegetables as Birmans use; these articles they transport at an early hour across the lake to the city, where they retail them in the market, and bring home the produce at night; this business is mostly performed by females; one man, commonly a person in years, accompanies each boat, in which, standing erect, he acts as steersman, whilst the women,

usually from ten to fourteen in number, sitting with their legs across, row short oars, or use paddles, according to the size of the vessel: when they set out in a morning, they proceed in silence; but returning at night, they join in jocund chorus, and time the stroke of their oars to the bars of their song. We were serenaded every evening from dusk till ten o'clock by successive parties of these joyous females, whose strains, though unpolished, were always melodious and pleasing. The Birmans, both men and women, are fond of singing whilst at work: it lightens their labour: "song sweetens toil, how rude soe'er the sound." Unfortunately our music was not confined to these passing chantresses; there were other performers, less agreeable, nearer to us. Our neighbours, the deputies from China, unluckily for the repose of those

from Britain, happened to be amateurs in their way, and had amongst their dependants a select band of musicians, such as I certainly had never heard equalled; it is impossible to describe the horrible noises that issued from gongs, drums, cymbals, an instrument with two strings, which may be called a fiddle, and something like a clarionet, that sent forth a sound more grating to the ear than all the rest. This was their constant nocturnal amusement, which never ended before midnight, and was not once remitted till the principal personage of the embassy became so indisposed that he could endure it no longer. Whilst he lingered, we enjoyed tranquillity; but after his decease the concert recommenced, and continued, to our great annoyance, till they quitted the grove to return to their native country.

The opposite habits of different nations were here strikingly evinced in the dissimilarity between the manners of the English, and those of the Chinese; the latter never left the precincts of their habitation, or manifested a desire to leave it, except to loll in easy chairs, and smoke their long pipes in the cool of the evening on the margin of the lake, about two or three hundred yards in front of their house. The English gentlemen accustomed themselves either to walk or ride three or four miles in the morning before breakfast, and the same distance in the afternoon, a circumstance that did not escape the notice of the Birmans. My customary route was in a southern direction, over pathways that led through rice fields, in my return making a circuit along the green border of the lake. Although there was not the least cause to apprehend

either injury or insolence, I was always attended in my excursions by six or eight soldiers, and by as many of my private servants, armed with sabres, who seemed to attract no less notice than myself. When I met any of the natives, particularly women, they squatted down into the posture of respect. As soon as the novelty of my appearance had a little worn off, I was told that they were still anxious to know why a person consulting his own amusement, and master of his own time, should walk so fast; but on being informed that I was "a Colar," or stranger, and that it was the custom of my country, they were reconciled to this as well as to every other act that did not coincide with their own prejudices and usage.

In a few days the return of the King was announced by the discharge of rock-

ets, and by the general bustle that so important an event caused among all classes of people: we saw nothing of the display; which we understood, on this occasion, was not at all pompous.

The period of our arrival occurred at a juncture that supplied the Birman court with a plausible excuse for postponing the consideration of public business, and delaying my formal reception, as well as the delivery of the letter from the Governor-General to the King. It so happened, that in the ensuing month there was to be an eclipse of the moon, an operation of nature which they ascribe to the interference of a malignant demon. On such an occasion, affairs of state, and all important matters of business, that will admit of procrastination, are put off to the following month. The astrologers

were assembled to consult on the first fortunate day after the lapse of that inauspicious moon, when they discovered that the seventeenth of the month Touzelien, corresponding with the 30th of August, was the earliest that would occur, and that day was accordingly appointed for the public reception of the English embassy.

Caution and policy had, perhaps, as great a share with the Birmans as superstition, in thus retarding the ceremony of our introduction: it was to them a novel incident; they were desirous to penetrate thoroughly into the objects we had in view, before any part of the subject came into formal discussion. They might probably also wish to have an opportunity to judge of our national character, and to determine, from our conduct, in what

manner to regulate their own; if such were their motives, they were consistent with that sagacity which I found invariably displayed by the Birman government in all its resolutions and acts of a public nature.

But the prevailing characteristic of the Birman court is pride; like the Sovereign of China, his Majesty of Ava acknowledges no equal; indeed, it is the fixed principle of all nations eastward of Bengal, to consider foreign ministers as suppliants come to solicit protection, not as representatives who may demand redress; rather as vassals to render homage, than as persons vested with authority to treat on equal terms. Of this system I was early apprized, and felt no disappointment at hearing of a general rumour current among the higher ranks of Birmans, that

a deputy had arrived from the English government, bearing tribute for their King. Reports of this nature were no otherwise regarded, than as an admonition to regulate my actions with scrupulous circumspection.

Amongst other regulations of this punctilious court, I was given to understand, that it was not customary for the King to receive any letter in a formal manner without being previously apprized of its contents. This created some difficulty in respect to the letter from the Governor-General, which was at length surmounted by an agreement on my part to admit of a copy being made in my presence; but it was stipulated by them, that it should be transcribed in the rhoom adjacent to my house, and not in my private residence. In this proposal I acqui-

esced; and accordingly a formal deputation, consisting of seven or eight officers of state, was directed to proceed to the rhoom, where they were to open the letter, and see it properly transcribed: these personages came with much parade, apparelled in their robes of ceremony; on landing, they walked directly to the rhoom, and, having taken their seats, sent a Terrezogee, or inferior officer, along with Baba-Sheen, to request I would come, and bring with me the Governor-General's letter; I obeyed this summons, accompanied by the other gentlemen and our usual attendants. On entering the rhoom, I was civilly desired, as the occasion was a solemn one, to make obeisance towards the piasath, or spire of the royal palace, which was more than two miles distant, a ceremony that I complied with by raising my right hand to my head,

and making a slight inclination of my body, after the manner of the Mahomedan Salaam. Being seated, I delivered the letter, which was written in English and in Persian, to the Woondock, or superior officer; it was immediately opened by a secretary: and an Armenian interpreter, named Muckatees, who spoke and wrote English fluently, was ordered to make a copy in English, whilst a Mussulman moonshee made another in Persian. When the writing was finished, I delivered a paper, which I desired might be laid before his Majesty's council, declaratory, in general terms, of the friendly wishes and views of the Governor-General in deputing me to the Birman court, and expressing my desire to maintain a confidential intercourse with such persons as his Majesty, or his council, should think proper to authorize.

The business being concluded, I returned to my house, and received a ceremonious visit from the Birman officers, among whom there were some personages of high distinction; a Woondock, but not the one that met me at Pagahm, presided; the master of the elephants, the old governor of Peenkeing, two Seredogees, or secretaries of state, and some other officers, whose names and stations I did not learn, were present; their robes, which were very graceful, were made either of velvet or flowered satin, with wide bodies, and loose sleeves: they were all invested with the chain of nobility, and wore caps covered with light-green taffety. Three of higher rank than the rest, had a wreath of gold leaves encircling the bottom of their caps, not unlike the strawberry leaves in a ducal coronet; their attendants, who were nume-

rous, carried a variety of utensils, such as their beetle box, water flaggon, drinking cup, and spitting pot; of which latter, from their filthy practice of chewing beetle, they stood in constant need. I regaled them with tea, and English raspberry jam spread on biscuits: although they praised, I do not think they much relished our preserve; they ate sparingly, and refreshed themselves with copious bowls of tea, unadulterated either by cream or sugar.

About this time the Chinese minister, who has already been mentioned as labouring under severe indisposition, sent me a polite message, expressing his regret that he had it not in his power to visit me in person; but that his two colleagues would wait on me whenever I should be at leisure to receive them; I returned my ac-

knowledgments, and appointed the following day.

It is customary among nations eastward of Bengal, when a public deputation is sent to a foreign court, to nominate three members, who constitute a council; although the president or chief of these is invested with all the power, and controls the proceedings of the rest, yet the distinction between them is not so wide as to preclude the juniors from a high degree of consequence being attached to their stations; and in case of the demise of the principal, the senior survivor executes all diplomatic functions, thus wisely guarding against any impediment which a casualty might throw in the way of negotiation.

The two junior members of the Chinese

deputation came at the appointed hour, accompanied by seven or eight attendants. There is no personage on earth so solemn and ceremonious as a Chinese officer of state; his dignity is preserved by profound silence, unless when occasion renders it necessary to exercise the faculty of speech, which is always slow, monotonous, and dull; even gentlemen, in the familiarity of private life, seldom depart from their gravity, or relax into a smile. On entering a room where there is company, good breeding is evinced by a modest but pertinacious refusal to sit down till the master of the house is first seated, which would be an equal violation of decorum on his part. This custom, I was told, sometimes produces a very ludicrous scene, and the guests are not unfrequently obliged to be dragged to their chairs, and placed in them almost by compulsion. My house

being about to undergo some alteration, I had caused a suite of tents, which I had brought with me, to be pitched for our temporary accommodation; in these I made arrangements to receive my visitors, who were exact to their time. On entering the door of the marquee, they both made an abrupt stop, and resisted all solicitation to advance to chairs, that had been prepared for them, until I should first be seated: in this dilemma Dr. Buchanan, who had visited China, advised me what was to be done; I immediately seized on the foremost, whilst the Doctor himself grappled with the second: thus we soon fixed them in their seats, both parties, during the struggle, repeating Chin Chin, Chin Chin, the Chinese term of salutation. The conversation was not at all lively or interesting; for, though I sat between them, our words had to make

a wide circuit before they reached each other's comprehension. I spoke in the language of Hindostan to a Mussulman who understood Birman, he delivered it to a Birman who spoke Chinese, this Birman gave it to the first official domestic, who repeated it to his master in the Chinese tongue. Our wines, port, claret, and madeira, all excellent of their kind, were served up; these, however, were too cold for Chinese palates; my visitants did not seem to relish them; but when cherry-brandy was introduced, their approbation was manifested by the satisfaction with which each of them swallowed a large glass full of the liquor: they tasted our tea, and, before they departed, politely presented me with some fans, two or three pieces of silk, two small boxes of tea, and three bottles of shouchou, a very fiery spirit distilled from rice, of

which the Chinese are extremely fond. I returned the visit on the following day, and was received with as much pomp and ostentation as circumstances would admit: in front of the house a silk ensign waved, on which was embroidered the imperial dragon of China, and at their gate were suspended whips and chains, importing the power which the owner possessed to inflict corporal punishment. The two junior members met me at the threshold of their habitation, apologized for the unavoidable absence of the chief personage, and introduced me into a hall, the walls of which were concealed by screens of silk, and the chairs covered with loose pieces of satin; this interview was rendered more interesting than the former, by a spontaneous question on the part of the senior Chinese, to know whether I had heard of the safe arrival

of Lord Macartney in England. His lordship having left China only the preceding year, it was not possible to have had accounts of his reaching England, and the issue of his lordship's negotiations was at that time wholly unknown; consequently, being unacquainted both with the objects and event of that splendid mission, I felt myself rather on delicate ground in regard to the enquiries which I, on my part, wished to make. In order to draw some conclusion from their discourse, I encouraged them to pursue the topic, by asking how his lordship's health had borne the vicissitudes of climate? They replied, that they only knew of the embassy from report, and seemed reluctant to enter into particulars, with which, it is probable, they were entirely unacquainted: I did not, therefore, press the subject farther; but I was not suffered to

remain long in doubt what their sentiments were. Chinese vanity scarcely yields to that of the Birmans; here was an opportunity, by exaggeration and misrepresentation, of indulging their own pride at the expence of the English nation, which, in the accounts circulated by them at Ummerapoora respecting the embassy to China, they did not neglect. They treated us with tea and sweetmeats, and smoked their long pipes with unrelaxed solemnity. I repaid their civilities by giving them some broad-cloth and brandy, and took my leave.

The alterations in my own dwelling, which I had suggested, were quickly carried into effect; and, by an order from the Lotoo, or grand council, a small additional building, of a square form, and raised from the ground, was erected within the

enclosure of our court, for the reception of the presents intended for his Majesty. I was given to understand that this building was meant as a compliment to what they thought proper to term among themselves, "tribute from the King of England;" but as no such arrogant assumption was ever publicly professed, I could not take notice of mere rumour: it was, however, privately intimated to me, that keeping our tents pitched, would be considered by the court in the light of a reflection upon its hospitality; and an inference would be drawn from it, that we were discontented with our habitation. I immediately ordered the marquees to be struck, nothing being farther from my intention than to give umbrage, or express dissatisfaction, for which indeed, in the present instance, there was certainly no ground.

The interval that elapsed between the time of our arrival at Ummerapoora, and of our formal introduction at court, afforded us leisure to acquire some insight into the customs, religious tenets, and moral economy of the Birman nation. Instead, therefore, of filling up the chasm by an unimportant journal, in which the acts of one day differed but little from those of the preceding, I shall dedicate a few pages to a more general account of the country, and endeavour, as far as our own circumscribed observation, and the information of others, enabled us, to illustrate the character of this people from their manners, and their state of society from the progress which the arts had made, and from the usages of the inhabitants in common life.

CHAPTER XIII.

Religion of the Birmans—Their Laws—Jurisdiction of the Metropolis—Lawyers—The Royal Establishment—Council of State—Officers—Honours not Hereditary—Insignia of Rank—Dress—Resemblance to the Chinese—Marriages—Funerals—Population—Revenue.

AFTER what has been written, there can be little necessity to inform my readers, that the Birmans are Hindoos: not votaries of Brahma, but sectaries of Boodh, which latter is admitted by Hindoos of all descriptions to be the ninth Avatar*, or descent of the deity in his capacity of preserver. He reformed the doctrines con-

* Sir William Jones on the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India.

tained in the Vedas, and severely censured the sacrifice of cattle, or depriving any being of life: he is called the author of happiness: his place of residence was discovered at Gaya in Bengal, by the illustrious Amara*, renowned amongst men, "who caused an image of the su- "preme Boodh to be made, and he wor- "shipped it: reverence be unto thee in "the form of Boodh; reverence be "unto thee, Lord of the earth; reverence "be unto thee, an incarnation of the "deity; and, eternal one, reverence be "unto thee, O God in the form of "Mercy."

* See the translation of a Shanscrit incription on a stone found in the temple of Boodh, at Gaya, by Mr. Wilkins. Asiat. Research. Vol. I. I am indebted for the annexed representation of the image of Boodh, at Gaya, to the kindness of Lord Teignmouth. The reader will observe the close resemblance it bears to that of the Birman Gaudma.

Gotma, or Goutum, according to the Hindoos of India, or Gaudma, among the inhabitants of the more eastern parts, is said * to have been a philosopher, and is by the Birmans believed to have flourished above 2300 † years ago: he taught, in the Indian schools, the heterodox religion and philosophy of Boodh. The image that represents Boodh is called Gaudma, or Goutum, which is now a commonly received appellation of Boodh himself: this image is the primary object of worship in all countries situated between Bengal and China. The sectaries of Boodh contend with those of Brahma for the honour of antiquity, and are certainly far more numerous. The Cingaleze

* Sir William Jones on the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India.

† This agrees with the account of the Siamese computation given by Kæmpfer.

in Ceylon are Boodhists of the purest source, and the Birmans acknowledge to have originally received their religion from that island*. It was brought, say the Rhahaans, first from Zehoo (Ceylon) to Arracan, and thence was introduced into Ava, and probably into China; for the Birmans assert with confidence that the Chinese are Boodhists.

This is a curious subject of investigation, and the concurrent testimony of circumstances, added to the opinions of the most intelligent writers, seem to leave little doubt of the fact. It cannot, however, be demonstrated beyond the possibility of dispute, till we shall have acquired a more perfect knowledge of Chinese letters, and a readier access to their repositories of

* The Birmans call Ceylon, Zehoo.

learning. Little can at present be added to the lights cast on the subject by the late Sir William Jones, in his discourse delivered to the Asiatic Society on the Chinese. That great man has expressed his conviction in positive terms, that "Boodh was unquestionably the Foe of China," and that he was also the god of Japan, and the Woden of the Goths; an opinion which corresponds with, and is perhaps grafted on, the information of the learned and laborious Kæmpfer*, corroborated afterwards by his own researches.

* Speaking of the Budz, or Seaka, of the Japanese, Kæmpfer says, "I have strong reasons to believe, "both from the affinity of the name, and the very nature of this religion, that its author and founder is "the very same person whom the Bramins call "Budha, and believe to be the essential spirit of "Wishna, or their deity, who made his ninth appearance in the world under this name: the Peguers call

searches. On whatever grounds the latter inference rests, it will not tend to weaken the belief of his first position, when I observe that the Chinese deputies, on the occasion of our introduction to the Seredaw or high priest of the Birman empire, prostrated themselves before him, and afterwards adored an image of Gaudma with more religious fervour than mere politeness, or acquiescence in the customs of another nation, would have ex-

"him Samana Khutama." Hist. Japan. Book IV. ch. 6.

Treating on the introduction of Boodh into China, the same author says, "About the year of Christ 518, "one Darma, a great saint, and twenty-third successor on the holy see of Seaka (Budha), came over "into China from Seitenseku, as the Japanese writers "explain it, that is, from that part of the world which "lies westward with regard to Japan, and laid, properly speaking, the first firm foundation of the Budsdoism in that mighty empire." Book. IV. ch. 6.

cited: the Bonzes also of China, like the Rhahaans of Ava, wear yellow as the sacerdotal colour, and in many of their customs and ceremonies there may be traced a striking similitude.

Whatever may be the antiquity of the worship of Boodh, the wide extent of its reception cannot be doubted. The most authentic writer* on the eastern peninsula calls the image of Gaudma, as worshipped by the Siamese, Somona-codom: being unacquainted with the language of Siam, which, from so short a residence as four months, it was impossible he could have acquired, he confounds two distinct words, Somona, and Codom, signifying Codom, or Gaudma, in his incarnate state; the difference between the letters C and G may easily have arisen from the mode of

* Loubere.

pronunciation in different countries; even in the Birman manner of uttering the word, the distinction between these letters is not very clear. The Boodh of the Indians and the Birmans, is pronounced by the Siamese Pooth, or Pood; by the vulgar, Poo; which, without any violence to probability, might be converted by the Chinese into Foe*; the Tamulic termination *en*, as Mr. Chambers remarks, creates a striking resemblance between Pooden and the Woden of the Goths; every person who has conversed with the natives of India, knows that Boodh is the Dies Mercurii, the Wednesday, or Woden's day, of all Hindoos. Chronology, however, which must always be accepted as a surer guide to truth, than inferences drawn

* M. Gentil asserts, that the Chinese admit, by their own accounts, that Foe, their object of worship, was originally brought from India.

from the resemblance of words, and etymological reasoning, does not, to my mind, sufficiently establish that Boodh and Woden were the same. The period of the ninth incarnation of Vishnu was long antecedent to the existence of the deified hero of Scandinavia. Sir William Jones determines the period when Boodh appeared on the earth to be 1014 years before the birth of Christ. Odin, or Woden, flourished at a period not very distant from our Saviour, and was, according to some, a cotemporary of Pompey and of Julius Cæsar. The author of the Northern Antiquities places him 70 years after the Christian era. Even the Birman Gaudma, conformably to their account, must have lived above 500 years before Woden. So immense a space can hardly be supposed to have been overlooked: but if the supposition refers, not to the warrior of the

north, but to the original deity Odin, the attributes of the latter are as widely opposed to those of Boodh, who was himself only an incarnation of Vishnu, as the dates are incongruous. The deity, whose doctrines were introduced into Scandinavia, was a god of terror, and his votaries carried desolation and the sword throughout whole regions; but the Ninth Avatar* brought the peaceful olive, and came into the world for the sole purpose of preventing sanguinary acts. These apparent inconsistencies will naturally lead us to hesitate in acknowledging Boodh and Woden to be the same person: their doctrines are opposite, and their eras are widely remote.

* See the account of the Ninth Avatar, by the Rev. Mr. Maurice, in his History of Hindostan, Vol. II. Part 3.

Had that distinguished genius *, whose learning so lately illumined the East, been longer spared for the instruction and delight of mankind, he would probably have elucidated this obscurity, and have removed the dusky veil that still hangs over the religious legends of antiquity. The subject †, as it now stands, affords an ample field for indulging in pleasing theories, and fanciful speculations; and as the probability increases of being able to trace all forms of divine worship to one sacred and primeval source, the inquiry in proportion becomes more interesting, and

* I need hardly observe that I mean Sir William Jones.

† General Vallancey, so justly celebrated for his knowledge of the antiquities of his country, has expressed his perfect conviction that the Hindoos have been in Britain and in Ireland. See Major Ouseley's Oriental Collections, Vol. II. Much attention is certainly due to such respectable authority.

awakens a train of serious ideas in a reflecting mind.

It would be as unsatisfactory as tedious to attempt leading my reader through the mazes of mythological fable, and extravagant allegory, in which the Hindoo religion, both Braminical and Boodhic, is enveloped and obscured; it may be sufficient to observe, that the Birmans believe in the Metempsychosis, and that, after having undergone a certain number of transmigrations, their souls will at last either be received into their Olympus on the mountain Meru*, or be sent to suffer torments in a place of divine punishments. Mercy they hold to be the first attribute

* Meru properly denotes the pole, and, according to the learned Captain Wilford, it is the celestial north pole of the Hindoos, round which they place the garden of Indra, and describe it as the seat of delights.

of the divinity: "Reverence be to thee, O God, in the form of Mercy!" and they worship God by extending mercy unto all his creatures.

The laws of the Birmans, like their religion, are Hindoo; in fact, there is no separating their laws from their religion: divine authority revealed to Menu the sacred principles in a hundred thousand slocas, or verses; Menu promulgated the code; numerous commentaries * on Menu were composed by the Munis, or old philosophers, whose treatises constitute the Dherma Sastra, or body of law.

* The code of Gentoo laws, translated by Mr. Halhed, I am informed, is a compilation from the different commentaries on Menu, who was "the grandson of Bramah, the first of created beings," and whose work, as translated by Sir William Jones, is the ground of all Hindoo jurisprudence.

The Birmans generally call their code Derma Sath, or Sastra; it is one among the many commentaries on Menu: I was so fortunate as to procure a translation of the most remarkable passages, which were rendered into Latin by Padre Vincentius Sangermano, and, to my great surprise, I found it to correspond closely with a Persian version of the Arracan code which is now in my possession. From the inquiries, to which this circumstance gave rise, I learned that the laws, as well as the religion of the Birmans, had found their way into the Ava country from Arracan, and came originally from Ceylon*. The Birman system of juris-

* As an incontestible proof that the Birmans acknowledge the superior antiquity of the Cingaleze, and the reception of their religion and laws from that quarter, the King of Ava has sent, within these few years, at separate times, two messengers, persons of

prudence is replete with sound morality, and, in my opinion, is distinguished above any other Hindoo commentary for perspicuity and good sense; it provides specifically for almost every species of crime that can be committed, and adds a copious chapter of precedents and decisions to guide the inexperienced in cases where there is doubt and difficulty. Trial by ordeal and imprecation are the only absurd passages in the book; but on the subject of women it is, to an European, offensively indecent: like the immortal Menu, it tells the prince and the magistrate their duty, in language austere, manly, and energetic; and the exhortation at the

learning and respectability, to Ceylon, to procure the original books on which their tenets are founded; and, in one instance, the Birman minister made an official application to the Governor-General of India, to protect and assist the person charged with the commission.

close is at once noble and pious; the following extracts will serve as a specimen:

"A country may be said to resemble "milk, in which oppression is like to "water; when water is mingled with "milk, its sweetness immediately va-"nishes: in the same manner oppression "destroys a fair and flourishing country. "The royal Surkaab * will only inhabit "the clearest stream; so a prince can "never prosper in a distracted empire. "By drinking pure milk the body is "strengthened and the palate is gratified; "but when mingled with water, pleasure "no longer is found, and the springs of "health gradually decline.

"A wise prince resembles a sharp

* Bittern. Surkaab is a Persian term, used by the Mahomedan translator.

"sword, which at a single stroke cuts
"through a pillar with such keenness
"that the fabric still remains unshaken;
"with equal keenness his discernment
"will penetrate advice.

"A wise prince is dear to his people,
"as the physician is to the sick man; as
"light to those that are in darkness; as
"unexpected sight to the eyes of the
"blind; as is the full moon on a wintry
"night, and milk to the infant from the
"breast of its mother."

The commentator then proceeds to denounce tremendous judgments against an oppressive prince and a corrupt judge; the latter is thus curiously menaced:

"The punishment of his crimes, who
"judges iniquitously, and decides falsely,

"shall he greater than though he had "slain one thousand women; one "hundred priests, or one thousand "horses."

The book concludes as follows:

"Thus have the learned spoken, and "thus have the wise decreed, that liti- "gation may cease among men, and con- "tention be banished the land: and let "all magistrates and judges expound the "laws as they are herein written; and "to the extent of their understanding, "and according to the dictates of their "conscience, pronounce judgment agree- "ably to the tenor of this book: let the "welfare of their country, and the benefit "of their fellow-creatures, be their con- "tinual study, and the sole object of their "attention: let them ever be mindful of

" the supreme dignity of the Roulah * " and the Bramins, and pay them that " reverence which is due to their sacred " characters: let them observe becoming " respect towards all men, and they shall " shield the weak from oppression, sup- " port the helpless, and, in particular " cases, mitigate the severity of avenging " justice.

" It shall be the duty of a prince, and " the magistrates of a prince, wisely to " regulate the internal police of the em- " pire, to assist and befriend the peasants, " merchants, farmers, and those who fol- " low trades, that they may daily increase " in worldly wealth and happiness; they " shall promote all works of charity, en- " courage the opulent to relieve the poor, " and liberally contribute to pious and

* The Arracan name for Rhahaan.

" laudable purposes; and whatsoever " good works shall be promoted by their " influence and example, whatsoever shall " be given in charity, and whatsoever " benefit shall accrue to mankind from " their endeavours, it shall all be preserved " in the records of heaven, one-sixth part " of which, though the deeds be the " deeds of others, yet shall it be ascribed " unto them; and at the last day, at " the solemn and awful hour of judg- " ment, the recording spirit shall produce " them, inscribed on the adamantine " tablet of human actions. But, on the " other hand, if the prosperity of the " nation be neglected, if justice be suf- " fered to lie dormant, if tumults arise " and robberies are committed, if rapine " and foul assassination stalk along the " plains, all crimes that shall be thus per- " petrated through their remissness, one-

"sixth part shall be brought to their "account, and fall with weighty vengeance on their heads; the dreadful consequences of which surpass the power "of tongue to utter, or of pen to express."

Laws, thus dictated by religion, are, I believe, in general, conscientiously administered. The criminal jurisprudence of the Birmans is lenient in particular cases, but rigorous in others; whoever is found guilty of an undue assumption of power, or of any crime that indicates a treasonable intent, is punished by the severest tortures. The first commission of theft does not incur the penalty of death, unless the amount stolen be above 800 kiat, or tackal, about £100. or attended with circumstances of atrocity, such as murder or mutilation. In the former case, the

culprit has a round mark imprinted on each cheek by gunpowder and punctuation, and on his breast the word thief, with the article stolen; for the second offence he is deprived of an arm; but the third inevitably produces capital punishment: decapitation is the mode by which criminals suffer, in the performance of which the Birman executioners are exceedingly skilful.

The city of Ummerapoora is divided into four distinct subordinate jurisdictions, in each of which a Maywoon presides. This officer, who, in the provinces, is a viceroy, in the metropolis resembles a mayor, and holds a civil and criminal court of justice; in capital cases he transmits the evidence in writing, with his opinion, to the Lotoo, or grand chamber of consultation, where the council of

state assembles ; the council, after close examination into the documents, reports upon them to the King, who either pardons the offender, or orders execution of the sentence : the Maywoon is obliged to attend in person, and see the punishment carried into effect.

Civil suits may be transferred from the courts of the Maywoons to the Lotoo; this removal, however, is attended with a heavy expence. There are regular established lawyers, who conduct causes, and plead; eight only are licensed to plead in the Lotoo; they are called Ameendozaan,: the usual fee is five tackal, equal to sixteen shillings; but the government has large profits on all suits that are brought into court.

There is no country of the East in

which the royal establishment is arranged with more minute attention than in the Birman court; it is splendid without being wasteful, and numerous without confusion; the most distinguished members, when I was at the capital, were: the Sovereign, his principal Queen, entitled Nandoh Praw, by whom he has not any sons; his second wife, Myack Nandoh, by whom he has two sons; the Engy Teekien *, or Prince Royal, and Pêe Teekien, or Prince of Prome. The princes of Tongho, Bassien, and Pagahm, are by favourite concubines. Meedah Praw is a princess of high dignity, and mother of the chief queen. The prince royal is married, and has a son and two daughters, all young; the son takes precedence of his uncles, the crown descending to the

* Often called Engy Praw.

male heirs in a direct line. These were the principal personages of the Birman royal family.

Next in rank to the princes of the blood royal, are the Woongees *, or chief ministers of state. The established number is four, but the place of one has long been vacant: these form the great ruling council of the nation; they sit in the Lotoo, or imperial hall of consultation, every day, except on the Birman sabbath, from twelve till three or four o'clock, or later, as there happens to be business; they issue mandates to the Maywoons, or viceroys of, the different provinces; they control every department of the state, and, in fact, govern the empire, sub-

* Woon signifies Burthen; the compound word implies, Bearer of the Great Burthen.

ject always to the pleasure of the King, whose will is absolute, and power undefined.

To assist in the administration of affairs, four officers, called Woondocks, are associated with the Woongees, but of far inferior authority; they sit in the Lotoo in a deliberative capacity, having no vote: they give their opinions, and may record their dissent from any measure that is proposed; but the Woongees decide: the Woondocks, however, are frequently employed to carry into execution business of great public importance.

Four Attawoons, or Ministers of the interior, possess a great degree of influence that sometimes counteracts with success the views and wishes of the Woongees; these the King selects to be

his privy counsellors, from their talents, and the opinion he entertains of their integrity; they have access to him at all times; a privilege which the principal Woongee does not enjoy.

There are four chief secretaries, called Sere-dogees, who have numerous writers or inferior Serees under them.

Four Nachaangee sit in the Lotoo, take notes, and report whatever is transacted.

Four Sandohgaan regulate all ceremonials, introduce strangers of rank into the royal presence, and are the bearers of messages from the council of state to the King.

There are nine Sandozains, or readers,

whose business it is to read all official writings, petitions, &c. Every document, in which the public is concerned, or that is brought before the council in the Lotoo, is read aloud.

The four Maywoons already mentioned, are restricted to the magisterial superintendance of their respective quarters of the city; they have nothing farther to do with the Lotoo, than to obey the commands they receive from thence.

The Assaywoon, or paymaster-general, is also an officer of high importance; the place is at present held by one of the Woongees, who is called Assay Woongee.

There are several other officers of distinction, who bear no ostensible share

in the administration of public affairs, such as the Daywoon, or King's armour-bearer; the Chaingeewoon, or master of the elephants; also the Woons of the Queen's household, and that of the prince royal. Each of the junior princes has a distinct establishment.

In the Birman government there are no hereditary dignities or employments; all honours and offices, on the demise of the possessor, revert to the crown.

The tsaloe, or chain, is the badge of the order of nobility, of which there are different degrees, distinguished by the number of strings or small chains that compose the ornament; these strings are fastened by bosses where they unite: three of open chain work is the lowest rank; three of neatly twisted wire is the

next; then of six, of nine, and of twelve: no subject is ever honoured with a higher degree than twelve; the King alone wears twenty-four.

It has already been noticed, that almost every article of use, as well as ornament, particularly in their dress, indicates the rank of the owner; the shape of the beetle-box, which is carried by an attendant after a Birman of distinction wherever he goes, his ear-rings, cap of ceremony, horse furniture, even the metal of which his spitting-pot and drinking-cup are made (which if of gold, denote him to be a man of high consideration), all are indicative of the gradations of society; and woe be unto him that assumes the insignia of a degree which is not his legitimate right!

The court dress of the Birman nobility is very becoming; it consists of a long robe, either of flowered satin or velvet, reaching to the ankles, with an open collar and loose sleeves; over this there is a scarf, or flowing mantle, that hangs from the shoulders; and on their heads they wear high caps made of velvet, either plain or of silk embroidered with flowers of gold, according to the rank of the wearer. Ear-rings are a part of male dress; persons of condition use tubes of gold about three inches long, and as thick as a large quill, which expands at one end like the mouth of a speaking-trumpet; others wear a heavy mass of gold beaten into a plate, and rolled up; this lump of metal forms a large orifice in the lobe of the ear, and drags it down by the weight to the extent sometimes of two inches. The women likewise

have their distinguishing paraphernalia: their hair is tied in a bunch at the top of the head, and bound round with a fillet, the embroidery and ornaments of which express their respective ranks; a short shift reaches to the pit of the stomach, is drawn tight by strings, and supports the breasts; over that is a loose jacket with close sleeves; round their waist they roll a long piece of silk, or cloth, which, reaching to their feet, and sometimes trailing on the ground, encircles them twice, and is then tucked in. When women of condition go abroad, they put on a silk sash, resembling a long shawl, which crosses their bosom, and is thrown over the shoulders, gracefully flowing on each side. The lowest class of females often wear only a single garment, in the form of a sheet, which, wrapped round the body, and tucked in under the arm,

crosses their breasts, which it scarcely conceals, and descends to their ankles; thus, when they walk, the bottom of the cloth, where it overlaps, is necessarily opened by the protrusion of the leg, and displays to a side view as high as the middle of the thigh; such an exposure, in the opinion of an European, bears an indecent appearance, although it excites no such idea in the people themselves. There is an idle and disgusting story related by some writers, respecting the origin of this fashion, which, being wholly unfounded, does not deserve repetition: it has been the established national mode of dress from time immemorial; and every woman, when walking, must shew great part of her leg, as what may be called their petticoat is always open in front, instead of being closed by a seam.

Women, in full dress, stain the palms of their hands and their nails of a red colour, for which they use a vegetable juice, and strew on their bosoms powder of sandal wood, or of a bark called Sunneka, with which some rub their faces. Both men and women tinge the edges of their eyelids and their teeth with black; this latter operation gives to their mouths a very unseemly appearance in the eyes of an European, which is not diminished by their being constantly filled with beetle leaf. Men of rank wear, in common dress, a tight coat, with long sleeves made of muslin, or of extremely fine nankeen, which is manufactured in the country; also a silk wrapper that encircles the waist: the working class are usually naked to the middle, but in the cold season a mantle or vest of European broad cloth is highly prized.

The Birmans in their features bear a nearer resemblance to the Chinese than to the natives of Hindostan. The women, especially in the northern part of the empire, are fairer than Hindoo females, but not so delicately formed; they are, however, well made, and in general inclined to corpulence: their hair is black, coarse, and long. The men are not tall in stature, but active and athletic; they have a very youthful appearance, from the custom of plucking their beards instead of using the razor: they tattoo their thighs and arms into various fantastic shapes and figures, which they believe operate as a charm against the weapons of their enemies. Neither the men nor the women are so cleanly in their persons as the Hindoos of India, among whom diurnal ablution is a religious as well as a moral duty. Girls are taught, at an early age, to turn their arms

in such a manner as to make them appear distorted: when the arm is extended the elbow is inverted, the inside of the joint being protruded, and the external part bending inwards; from this cause, the pendent arm in the Plates seems as if it were broken; the representation is, nevertheless, perfectly faithful.

Marriages among the Birmans are not contracted until the parties attain the age of puberty: the contract is purely civil; the ecclesiastical jurisdiction having nothing to do with it. The law prohibits polygamy, and recognizes but one wife, who is denominated Mica; concubinage, however, is admitted to an unlimited extent. A man may repudiate his wife under particular circumstances, but the process is attended with a heavy expence. Concubines, living in the same house with

the legitimate wife, are, by law, obliged to perform menial services for her, and when she goes abroad they attend her, bearing her water-flaggon, beetle-box, fan, &c. When a husband dies, his concubines, if bound in servitude to him, become the property of the surviving widow, unless he shall have emancipated them by a specific act previous to his decease. When a young man is desirous to espouse a girl, his mother, or nearest female relation, first makes the proposal in private; if the suit be well received, a party of his friends proceed to the house of the parents of the maiden, with whom they adjust the dotal portion. On the morning of the bridal day the bridegroom sends to the lady three loongees, or lower garments, three tubbecks, or sashes, and three pieces of white muslin; such jewels also, ear-rings and bracelets, as his

circumstances will admit: a feast is prepared by the parents of the bride, and formal writings are executed: the new-married couple eat out of the same dish, the bridegroom presents the bride with some læpack, or pickled tea, which she accepts, and returns the compliment: thus ends the ceremony, without any of that subsequent riot* and resistance on the part of the young lady and her female friends, with which the Sumatrian damsels oppose the privileges of an ardent bridegroom.

When a man dies intestate, three-fourths of his property go to his children born in wedlock, but not in equal proportions; and one-fourth to the widow, who is the guardian both of the property and the

* See Marsden's Account of Sumatra, page 230.

children, until the latter attain the age of maturity. A Birman funeral is solemnized with much religious parade, and external demonstration of grief: the corpse is carried on a bier, on men's shoulders; the procession moves slowly; the relations attend in mourning; and women, hired for the occasion, precede the body, and chant a dirge-like air. The Birmans burn their dead, unless the deceased is a pauper, in which case he is either buried or cast into the river, as the ceremony of burning is very expensive. The bier is placed on a funeral pile six or eight feet high, made of billets of dried wood laid across, with intervals to admit a circulation of air, and increase the flame. The Rhahaans walk round the pile, reciting prayers to Gaudma, until the fire reaches the body, when the whole is quickly reduced to ashes: the bones are afterwards

gathered and deposited in a grave. Persons of high distinction, such as the Seredaw, or chief ecclesiastic of a province, a Maywoon, a Woongee, or a member of the royal family, are embalmed, and their remains preserved six weeks or two months after decease, before they are committed to the funeral pile: during this period the body is laid in state in some kioum or religious building; but at the capital it is placed in a sacred saloon, beautifully ornamented with gilding, and exclusively appropriated to that pious purpose. I was told, that honey is the principal ingredient made use of to preserve the body from putrefaction.

Of the population of the Birman dominions I could only form a conclusion from the information I received of the number of cities, towns, and villages in

the empire; these, I was assured by a person who might be supposed to know, and had no motive for deceiving me, amount to eight thousand, not including the recent addition of Arracan. If this be true, which I have no reason to doubt, and we suppose each town, on an average, to contain three hundred houses, and each house six persons, the result will determine the population at fourteen millions four hundred thousand. Few of the inhabitants live in solitary habitations; they mostly form themselves into small societies, and their dwellings thus collected compose their Ruas, or villages; if, therefore, we reckon their numbers, including Arracan, at seventeen millions, the calculation may not be widely erroneous; I believe it rather falls short of, than exceeds the truth. After all, however, it is mere conjecture, as I have no

better data for my guidance than what I have related.

With regard to the revenue of the Birman state, I confess myself to be without the means of forming even a rough estimate of the amount. According to the sacred law in the chapter which treats of the duties of a monarch, Dhasameda*, or a tenth of all produce, is the proportion which is to be exacted as the authorized due of the government; and one-tenth is the amount of the King's duty on all foreign goods imported into his dominions. The revenue arising from the customs on imports, and from internal produce, is mostly taken in kind; a small part of which is converted into cash, the rest is distributed, as received, in lieu of salaries, to the various dependants of the court.

* See Appendix.

Princes of the blood, high officers of state, and provincial governors, receive grants of provinces, cities, villages, and farms, to support their dignity, and as a remuneration of their services: the rents of these assignments they collect for their own benefit. Money, except on pressing emergency, is never disbursed from the royal coffers; to one man the fees of an office are allotted; to another a station where certain imposts are collected; a third has land; each in proportion to the importance of his respective employment: by these donations, they are not only bound in their own personal servitude, but likewise in that of all their dependants; they are called slaves of the King, and in turn their vassals are denominated slaves to them: the condition of these grants include also services of war, as well as the duties of office. Thus the Birman

government exhibits almost a faithful picture of Europe in the darker ages, when, on the decline of the Roman empire, the principles of feodal dependance were established by barbarians from the north.

Although it seems difficult, and perhaps impossible, under such a system, to ascertain, in any standard currency, the amount of the royal revenue, yet the riches which the Birman monarch is said to possess are immense, a supposition that may readily be admitted, when it is considered that a very small share of what enters his exchequer returns into circulation. The hoarding of money is a favourite maxim of oriental state policy; an eastern potentate cannot be brought to comprehend that the diffusion of property among his subjects is a surer source of

wealth to himself, and of security to his throne, than the possession of Lydian treasures, locked up in vaults, and concealed in secret recesses, contrived by sordid avarice and foolish cunning.

CHAPTER XIV.

Military Establishment—Infantry—Cassay Cavalry—Artificers—War-boats—Gunpowder long known—Weapons—Food—Climate—Soil—Produce—Minerals—Precious Stones—Commerce—Currency—Weights—Measures—Character of the Natives—not jealous of their Women—ferocious in War—Beggars unknown.—Animals—Division of Time—Music——Language—Extent of the Empire——Rivers.

The Birmans may be termed a nation of soldiers, every man in the kingdom being liable to be called upon for his military services; and war is deemed the most honourable occupation: the regular military establishment of the Birmans is, nevertheless, very inconsiderable; not ex-

ceeding the numbers of which the royal guard is composed, and such as are necessary to preserve the police of the capital. When an army is to be raised, a mandate issues from the golden palace, to all viceroys of provinces, and Miougees of districts, requiring a certain number of men to be at a general rendezvous on an appointed day, under command sometimes of the viceroy himself, but oftener that of an inferior officer: the levy is proportioned to the population of the province, or district, estimated from the number of registered houses that it contains. The provincial court determines the burthen which each house is to bear; commonly every two, three, or four houses are to furnish among them one recruit, or to pay 300 tackal in money, about £40. or £45.; this recruit is supplied with arms, ammunition, and, I be-

lieve, with a certain daily allowance of grain from government, but is not entitled to pay. The families of these conscripts are carefully retained in the district which they inhabit, as hostages for the good conduct of their relation. In case of desertion or treachery, the innocent wife, children, and parents of the guilty person, are dragged to execution without the least remorse or pity; even cowardice subjects the family of the delinquent to capital punishment. This barbarous law, which is rigorously enforced, must have a powerful effect in securing the allegiance of the troops, and of impelling them to vigorous exertion; and it is, perhaps, the only sure mode of inciting to enterprises of danger, men who are not actuated by any innate sense of honour, and who do not feel any national pride.

Infantry and cavalry compose the regular guards of the King; the former are armed with muskets and sabres, the latter are provided with a spear about seven or eight feet long, which they manage on horseback with great dexterity, seldom requiring or making use of any other weapon. The infantry are not uniformly clothed; I heard various accounts of their numbers: 700 do constant duty within the precincts, and at the several gates of the palace: I think that on the day of my public reception, I saw about 2000, and have no doubt that all the troops in the city were paraded on that occasion. I was told that there were only 300 cavalry in Ummerapoora, but that 2000 were scattered, in small detachments, throughout the neighbouring districts. All the troopers in the King's service are natives of Cassay, who are much

better horsemen than the Birmans. Mr. Wood, who saw some of them at exercise, informed me, that they nearly resembled those whom he had met with in Assam; they ride, like all orientals, with short stirrups and a loose rein; their saddle is hard and high, and two large circular flaps of strong leather hang down on each side, painted or gilded, according to the quality of the rider. Their dress is not unbecoming; they wear a tight coat, with skirts reaching down to the middle of the thigh; and on their head a turban of cloth, rolled hard and plaited, which forms a high cone, that bends backward in a graceful manner. The horses of Ava are small, but very hardy and active; contrary to the practice of other eastern countries, they castrate their horses, and are thus enabled to maintain them with little trouble and expence, and can

also turn a number loose in a field together, without any risk of their injuring one another. Horses are frequently exported in timber ships bound for Madras, and other parts of the coast, where they are disposed of to considerable advantage.

The government of Ava is extremely attentive to provide, in times of peace, for the contingencies of war; the royal magazines, I was told, could furnish 20,000 firelocks, which, if they resembled the specimens I saw, cannot be very formidable; these have been imported, at different periods, into the country, by ships trading to Rangoon and other parts of the empire, and are either of French manufacture, or condemned muskets from the English arsenals in India. The Birmans are very fond of their arms, of which they take great care; their gunsmiths,

who are all natives of Cassay, keep them in repair; but they are in general so bad as to be out of the power of art to render them serviceable. I saw a tolerably good fowling piece, which they said was entirely the work of a Cassay artificer; this, however, was allowed to be an extraordinary effort of genius: the person who shewed it to me, presented me, at the same time, with a bamboo, which threw out a short spear of iron by means of a spring; it was executed by the maker of the gun, and seemed to be formed after a model of an English walking stick, that contained a concealed spike; the imitation evinced much ingenuity, although the workmanship was coarse, and the iron badly polished.

By far the most respectable part of the Birman military force is their establish-

ment of war-boats. Every town of note, in the vicinity of the river, is obliged to furnish a certain number of men, and one or more boats, in proportion to the magnitude of the place. I was informed, that the King can command, at a very short notice, 500 of these vessels: they are constructed out of the solid trunk of the teak tree, which is excavated partly by fire, and partly by cutting; the largest are from eighty to one hundred feet long, but the breadth seldom exceeds eight feet, and even this space is produced by artificially extending the sides after the trunk has been hollowed. They carry from fifty to sixty rowers, who use short oars that work on a spindle; the prow is solid, and has a flat surface, on which, when they go to war, a piece of ordnance is mounted, a six, a nine, or even a twelve pounder; the gun carriage is secured by

lashings to strong bolts on each side, and swivels are frequently fixed on the curvature of the stern.

Each rower is provided with a sword and a lance, which are placed by his side whilst he plies the oars. Besides the boatmen, there are usually thirty soldiers on board, who are armed with muskets: thus prepared, they go in fleets to meet the foe, and, when in sight, draw up in a line, presenting their prows to the enemy. Their attack is extremely impetuous; they advance with great rapidity, and sing a war-song, at once to encourage their people, daunt their adversaries, and regulate the strokes of their oars; they generally endeavour to grapple, and when that is effected, the action becomes very severe, as these people are endued with great courage, strength, and activity. In times

of peace, they are fond of exercising in their boats, and I have often been entertained with the dexterity they display in the management of them. The vessels being low in the water, their greatest danger is that of being run down by a larger boat striking on their broadside, a misfortune which the steersman is taught to dread, and to avoid, above all others. It is surprising to see the facility with which they steer, and elude each other in their mock combats. The rowers are also practised to row backwards, and impel the vessel with the stern foremost: this is the mode of retreat, by means of which the artillery still bears upon their opponent. The largest of the war-boats do not draw more than three feet water. When a person of rank is on board, there is a sort of moving tilt or canopy, for his particular accommodation, placed some-

times in the centre, and sometimes on the prow. The sides of the boat are either gilt as far as the water's edge, or plain, according to the rank of the person it carries. Gilded boats are only permitted to princes of the blood, or to persons holding the highest stations, such as a Maywoon of a province, and a minister of state.

It is by no means improbable, that the use of gunpowder was well known in India before its effects were discovered in the west; yet there is not any reason to believe, that the natives of Ava applied it to the purpose of musquetry, till Europeans instructed them in the art. According to Indian accounts, cannon were fabricated in the east long before the era of European conquest; their artillery, however, was not capable of being transported with facility, or at all used in the

field: they were made of iron bars beaten into a cylindrical form, rudely put together, but of great strength, and enormous weight, from which, when raised on a rampart or tower, they threw huge stones to annoy the enemy. The musquet was first introduced into the Pegue and Ava countries by the Portugueze, and is an implement of war which the inhabitants unwisely prefer to their own native weapons, the spear and sabre; a partiality that is highly prejudicial to themselves, for nothing can be less formidable than such fire arms as they possess, or have the means of procuring. The proper indigenous weapons of the country are the spear, the javelin, which is thrown from the hand, the cross-bow, and the sabre; the latter is used by the Birmans not only as an implement of war, but is likewise applied to various purposes as an instru-

ment of manual labour; with this the peasant fells trees, shapes timbers, cuts bamboos, or defends himself against an enemy, and wild beasts; he never travels without it, and generally, when on a journey, carries a shield on his left arm: they encumber themselves with less baggage than perhaps any other people; and are satisfied with a scanty portion of the hardest fare.

In their food, the Birmans, compared with the Indians, are gross and uncleanly. Although their religion forbids the slaughter of animals in general, yet they apply the interdiction only to those that are domesticated; all game is eagerly sought after, and in many places it is publicly sold; reptiles also, such as lizards, guanas, and snakes, constitute a part of the subsistence of the lower classes. During our

voyage up the river, the boatmen, after we had brought to, used frequently to hunt for camelions and lizards among the thickets. They are extremely fond of vegetables; at those places where garden greens were not to be procured, they gathered wild sorrel, and sometimes substituted the tender leaves of trees; these, boiled with rice, and moistened with a little oil, or seasoned with gnapee, or pickled sprat, compose a meal with which a Birman peasant or boatman is satisfied; the higher ranks, however, live with more delicacy, although their fare is never very sumptuous.

The climate of every part of the Birman empire which I have visited, bore testimony to its salubrity, by the best possible criterion, the appearance and vigour of the natives. The seasons are re-

gular, and the extremes of heat and cold are seldom experienced; at least, the duration of that intense heat which immediately precedes the commencement of the rainy season is so short, that it incommodes but for a very little time. During our residence in the country, we lost only one man by disease; another* met an accidental death, in wandering through the woods he became the prey of a tiger.

The soil of the southern provinces of the Birman empire is remarkably fertile, and produces as luxuriant crops of rice as are to be found in the finest parts of Bengal. Farther northward the country becomes irregular and mountainous; but the plains and valleys, particularly near the river, are exceedingly fruitful; they yield good wheat, and the various kinds

* This unfortunate man belonged to the Sea-Horse.

of small grain which grow in Hindostan; as likewise legumes, and most of the esculent vegetables of India. Sugar canes, tobacco of a superior quality, indigo, cotton, and the different tropical fruits, in perfection, are all indigenous products of this favoured land.

Besides the teak tree, which grows in many parts of the Birman empire, as well to the north of Ummerapoora, as in the southern country, there is almost every description of timber that is known in India. Dr. Buchanan, in one of his afternoon excursions, perceived a large log of fir, which, his attendant informed him, had been washed down by the torrents from a mountainous part of the country, four days journey northward of the capital, where it grows in abundance, and of considerable magnitude: the natives call

it Tænyo; they extract the turpentine, which they turn to use, but consider the wood of little value, on account of its softness. If they could be prevailed upon to transport it to Rangoon, it might prove a beneficial material to the navigation of India. Top-gallant masts and yards made of teak are thought to be too heavy. European and American spars are often bought for these purposes at a very exorbitant price, an inconvenience which the fir of Ava, if conveyed to the market, would probably obviate.

The kingdom of Ava abounds in minerals; six days journey from Bamoo, near the frontiers of China, there are mines of gold and silver, called Badouem: there are also mines of gold, silver, rubies, and sapphires at present open on a mountain near the Keenduem, called Wooboloo-

taun; but the most valuable, and those which produce the finest jewels, are in the vicinity of the capital, nearly opposite to Keoum-meoum. Precious stones are found in several other parts of the empire. The inferior minerals, such as contain iron, tin, lead, antimony, arsenic, sulphur, &c. are met with in great abundance; amber, of a consistence unusually pure and pellucid, is dug up in large quantities near the river; gold, likewise, is discovered in the sandy beds of streams which descend from the mountains. Between the Keenduem and the Irrawaddy, to the northward, there is a small river called Shoe Lien Kioup, or the Stream of Golden Sand.

Diamonds and emeralds are not produced in any part of the Ava empire; but it affords amethysts, garnets, very

beautiful chrysolites, jasper, loadstone, and marble; the quarries of the latter are only a few miles from Ummerapoora; it is equal in quality to the finest marble of Italy, and admits of a polish that renders it almost transparent. Blocks of any size that it is possible to transport might be procured, but the sale is prohibited; nor is it allowed to be carried away without a special order. Images of Gaudma being chiefly composed of this material, it is on that account held sacred. Birmans may not purchase the marble in mass, but are suffered and indeed encouraged to buy figures of the deity ready made. Exportation of their gods out of the kingdom is strictly forbidden. The city of Chagain is the principal manufactory of these marble divinities.

An extensive trade is carried on between

the capital of the Birman dominions and Yunan in China. The principal article of export from Ava is cotton, of which I was informed there are two kinds, one of a brown colour, of which nankeens are made, the other white, like the cotton of India; I did not see any of the former. This commodity is transported up the Irrawaddy in large boats, as far as Bamoo, where it is bartered at the common jee, or mart, with Chinese merchants, and conveyed by the latter, partly by land, and partly by water, into the Chinese dominions. Amber, ivory, precious stones, beetle nut, and the edible nests brought from the eastern Archipelago, are also articles of commerce: in return, the Birmans procure raw and wrought silks, velvets, gold leaf, preserves, paper, and some utensils of hardware.

The commerce between the capital and the southern parts of the empire is facilitated by the noble river that waters the country; its principal objects are the necessaries of life; several thousand boats are annually employed in transporting rice from the lower provinces, to supply Ummerapoora, and the northern districts; salt and gnapee may likewise be reckoned under the same head. Articles of foreign importation are mostly conveyed up the Irrawaddy; a few are introduced by way of Arracan, and carried over the mountains on the heads of coolies, or labourers; European broadcloth, a small quantity of hardware, coarse Bengal muslins, Cossembuzar silk handkerchiefs, China ware, which will not admit of land carriage, and glass, are the principal commodities. Cocoa nuts also, brought from the Nicobar Islands, where they are of uncommon ex-

cellence, are looked upon as a delicacy, and bear a high price: merchants carry down silver, lac, precious stones, and some other articles, to no great amount. A considerable sum of money is annually laid out at the capital in the purchase of marble statues of Gaudma, which are all fabricated in the district of Chagain, opposite Awa-haung, or ancient Ava: they are not permitted to be made at any other place.

The Birmans, like the Chinese, have no coin; silver in bullion, and lead, are the current monies of the country; weight and purity are, of course, the standard of value, and in the ascertainment of both the natives are exceedingly scrupulous and expert. What foreigners call a tackal, properly kiat, is the most general piece of silver in circulation: it weighs ten penny-

weights ten grains and three-fourths; its subdivisions are, the tubbee, two of which make one moo; two moo one math; four math one tackal, and one hundred tackal compose one viss. Money scales and weights are all fabricated at the capital, where they are stamped, and afterwards circulated throughout the empire; the use of any others is prohibited.

Rice is sold by a measure called Tayndaung, or basket; the weight is sixteen viss, about fifty-six pounds. There are many subdivisions of measurement. The average price of rice at the capital is one tackal, rather more than half-a-crown, for a basket and a half. At Rangoon and Martaban one tackal will purchase four or five baskets.

The bankers, called by foreigners Py-

mon, are likewise workers in silver, and assayers of metal: this is a class of people very numerous, and indispensably necessary, as no stranger can undertake either to pay or receive money without having it first examined. Every merchant has a banker of this description, with whom he lodges all his cash, and who, for receiving and paying, gets an established commission of one per cent.; in consideration of which he is responsible for the quality of what goes through his hands; and in no instance did I ever hear of a breach of trust committed by one of these bankers. The quantity of alloy varies in the silver current in different parts of the empire; at Rangoon it is adulterated twenty-five per cent.; at Ummerapoora, pure, or what is called flowered silver, is most common; in this latter all royal dues are paid. The several modifications are as follows:

Rouni, or pure silver.	
Rounika,	5 per cent. of alloy.
Rounizee,	10 per cent.
Rouassee,	20 per cent.
Moowadzoo,	25 per cent.
Woombo,	30 per cent.

Any person may have his silver either purified or depreciated to whatever standard he chooses; the nearest silversmith will be glad to perform the work, free from charge for his labour, as the bringer by the operation must lose a trifle, which the artist gains: the small quantity of metal that adheres to the crucible is his profit. I was informed, that the silversmith can sell these crucibles afterwards to refiners for forty tackals a thousand, and that an adequate gain accrues to the purchaser from the metal extracted from the pot after it is broken.

The Birman measures of length are, a Paul-gâut, or inch, eighteen of which compose the Taim, or cubit.

The Saundaung, or royal cubit*, equal to twenty-two inches.

The Dha, or Bamboo, which consists of seven royal cubits; 1000 dha make one Birman league, or Dain, nearly equal to two British miles and two furlongs; the league is also subdivided into tenths. The Birmans keep their accounts in decimals, after the manner of the Chinese.

It has already been noticed, that the general disposition of the Birmans is strikingly contrasted with that of the natives of India, from whom they are sepa-

* This cubit varies according to the will of the monarch.

rated only by a narrow range of mountains, in many places admitting of an easy intercourse. Notwithstanding the small extent of this barrier, the physical difference between the nations could scarcely be greater, had they been situated at the opposite extremities of the globe. The Birmans are a lively, inquisitive race, active, irascible, and impatient; the character of their Bengal neighbours is too well known, as the reverse, to need any delineation; the unworthy passion of jealousy, which prompts most nations of the east to immure their women within the walls of an haram, and surround them with guards, seems to have scarcely any influence over the minds of this extraordinary and more liberal people. Birman wives and daughters are not concealed from the sight of men, and are suffered to have as free intercourse with each other

as the rules of European society admit: but in other respects women have just reason to complain of their treatment; they are considered as not belonging to the same scale of the creation as men, and even the law stamps a degrading distinction between the sexes; the evidence of a woman is not received as of equal weight with that of a man, and a woman is not suffered to ascend the steps of a court of justice, but is obliged to deliver her testimony on the outside of the roof. The custom of selling their women to strangers, which has before been adverted to, is confined to the lowest classes of society, and is perhaps oftener the consequence of heavy pecuniary embarrassment, than an act of inclination: it is not, however, considered as shameful, nor is the female dishonoured; partly perhaps from this cause, and partly from their habits of

education, women surrender themselves the victims of this barbarous custom with apparent resignation. It is also said, that they are very seldom unfaithful to their foreign masters; indeed they are often essentially useful, particularly to those who trade, by keeping their accounts and transacting their business: but when a man departs from the country, he is not suffered to carry his temporary wife along with him; on that point the law is exceedingly rigorous: every ship, before she receives her clearance, is diligently searched by the officers of the custom-house: even if their vigilance were to be eluded, the woman would be quickly missed; and it would be soon discovered in what vessel she had gone, nor could that ship ever return to a Birman port but under penalty of confiscation of the property, and the infliction of a heavy fine and imprisonment

on the master: female children also, born of a Birman mother, are not suffered to be taken away. Men are permitted to emigrate: but they think that the expatriation of women would impoverish the state, by diminishing the sources of its population.

One vice is usually the parent of another: the Birmans, being exempt from that of jealousy, do not resort to the diabolical practice of emasculating male children, to educate them as spies over their women. Chastity, they know, is more safely guarded by principles of honour and attachment than by moats or castles. When Arracan was conquered by the Birmans, several eunuchs were made prisoners, belonging to the prince of the country, who had adopted that degenerate custom of Mahomedan growth. These

people are maintained by the Birman monarch rather as memorials of his conquest, than for any services they are required to perform. Infidelity is not a characteristic of Birman wives; in general they have too much employment to leave leisure for the corruption of their minds. A woman of the highest rank seldom sits in idleness at home; her female servants, like those of Grecian dames of antiquity, ply "the various labours of the loom:" whilst the mistress superintends and directs their industry. On the occasion of a formal visit to the mother of the present Queen, we observed in one of the galleries of her palace, three or four looms at work, wrought by the damsels of her household. Weaving is chiefly a female occupation. Most Birman families make all the cotton and silk cloth that is required for their domestic consumption.

The Birmans, in some points of their disposition, display the ferocity of barbarians, and in others, all the humanity and tenderness of polished life: they inflict the most savage vengeance on their enemies; as invaders, desolation marks their track, for they spare neither sex nor age: but at home they assume a different character; there they manifest benevolence, by extending aid to the infirm, the aged, and the sick: filial piety is inculcated as a sacred precept, and its duties are religiously observed. A common beggar is nowhere to be seen: every individual is certain of receiving sustenance, which, if he cannot procure it by his own labour, is provided for him by others.

During the several excursions which we made into the country, we did not perceive any of the feathered tribe that

were peculiar to this part of the world, or that were not to be met with in India, the ornithology of which is already well known. The Henza, the symbol of the Birman nation, as the eagle was, of the Roman empire, is a species of wild fowl, called in India the Braminy goose; but the natives of Ava do not deify the bird. Of the beasts of Ava, the only one that I saw, with which I was unacquainted, was the ichneumon, or the rat of Pharaoh, called by the natives Ounbaii. It is a singular circumstance, that there should not be such an animal as the jackal in the Ava dominions, considering that they are so numerous in the adjoining country. Pegue abounds in elephants; for though they are to be met with in other parts of the empire, that seems to be their favourite abode. One of his Birman Majesty's titles is, Lord of the White

Elephant, and of all the Elephants in the World.

The Birmans divide their time as follows:

The space in which the finger can be raised and depressed is called charazi; ten charazi make one piaan; six piaan one bizana (about a minute). The day, of twenty-four hours, commencing at noon, is divided into eight portions, or yettee, of three hours each, thus denominated:

Moon Yettee, or noon.

Loung Yettee, 3 P. M.

Lay Yettee, 6 P. M.

Gneah Yettee, 9 P. M.

Gneah Gnek Yettee, midnight.

Gneah Laghee Loung Yettee, 3 in the morning.

Mioh Ling Yettee, 6 A. M.

Gneah Tek Yettee, 9 A. M.

These divisions of time are ascertained by a machine resembling the hour-glass, and sometimes by a perforated pan placed in a tub of water: they are announced by a stroke on an oblong drum, which is always kept near the dwelling of the chief magistrate of the city, town, or village; it is commonly raised on a high bamboo stage, with a roof of mats to protect it from the weather.

The edifice at the royal palace for the reception of this instrument is of masonry, and very lofty, whence the sound is said to be distinctly conveyed to the remotest extremes of the city.

The Birman year is divided into twelve months, which, strictly speaking, cannot be called synodical, although they comprehend the same number of days. A re-

volution of the moon, in passing from one conjunction with the sun to another, is performed in 29 days 12 hours and 44 minutes; but the Birman lunations consist of 29 and 30 days, alternate, which causes a difference between the Newtonian and Birman lunar account of 8 hours and 48 minutes. The Birman months are as follow:

	Days.
Tagoo contains - - -	29
Kayoung - - -	30
Nay Young - -	29
Wazoo - - -	30
Wagoung - - -	29
Toozelien - - -	30
Sandaing Guite - - -	29
Tazoung Moang - -	30
Gnadoh - - -	29
Pèeazoo - - - -	30
Taboodway - - -	29
Taboung - - - -	30
	354

In order to complete a solar revolution, they intercalate in every third year a month of 30 days, which is called Toodea Wazoo; in this third year the months of Tagoo and Nay Young have each 30 days instead of 29; they likewise suppress or pass over a day, which, if reckoned, would either be the 31st Taboung or the 1st of Tagoo: by these means the number of days in three solar years is thus computed:

	Days.
Three lunar years, of 354 days each	1062
Intercalary month in the third year	30
Two intercalary days in Tagoo and Nay Young - - -	2
Suppressed, or passed over at the end of the year - -	1
	1095

This computation corresponds, in the

number of days, with three years; every fourth year however will occasion the difference of a day on account of our bissextile or leap year; of this the Birmans are fully sensible, as well as of many other defects in their manner of reckoning: to remedy the confusion likely to ensue from such erroneous calculations, their style or mode has frequently been altered by arbitrary authority. His present Birman Majesty, however, is so desirous to ascertain and establish, by accurate tables, a permanent and unvarying measurement of time, that he made an application to the late Governor General of India to send to his capital a Bramin well versed in astronomy, to assist the deliberations of his council of professors, among whom his Majesty always presides in person, and he is said to be no inconsiderable proficient in the science of astronomy.

The manner in which the Birman month is subdivided, I imagine, is peculiar to their nation: instead of reckoning the days progressively from the commencement to the close of the month, they advance no farther than the full moon, from which they recede by retrogressive enumeration until the month is finished.

Thus the new moon is called,

Lahzan terrait gnay, or first day of the increasing moon.

Lahzan gnerait gnay, second day, &c.

Lahzan loungrait gnay, third day, &c.

Lahzan layrait gnay, fourth day, &c.

Lahzan narait gnay, fifth day, &c.

Lahzan kioukrait gnay, sixth day, &c.

Lahzan koonrait gnay, seventh day, &c.

Lahzan sheaseddainrait gnay, eighth day, &c.

Lahzan karait gnay, ninth day, &c.

Lahzan sayrait gnay, tenth day, &c.

Lahzan say terrait gnay, eleventh day, &c.

Lahzan say-gnerrait gnay, twelfth day, &c.

Lahzan say soungrait gnay, thirteenth day, &c.

Lahzan tassay sayrait gnay, fourteenth day, &c.

Lah bee, fifteenth day, &c.

Lah bee-goo terrait gnay, or the first day of the decreasing moon.

The seventeenth, eighteenth, &c. correspond with the second and third of the increasing moon, substituting Lah Bee-goo for Lahzan. The last day of the month, whether of twenty-nine or thirty days, is called Lah gnay.

The Birman month is divided into four

weeks of seven days each; the days are distinguished by the following names:

Tamaing nuaye, Sunday, the first day of the Birman week.

Talain lah, -	Monday.
Aing gah, -	Tuesday.
Boodt-hoo, -	Wednesday.
Keah-subbeday,	Thursday.
Zoup keah, -	Friday.
Sunnay, - -	Saturday.

The eighth day of the increasing moon, the fifteenth or full moon, the eighth of the decreasing moon, and the last day of the moon, are religiously observed by Birmans as sacred festivals. On these hebdominal holidays no public business is transacted in the Rhoom: mercantile dealings are suspended; handicraft is forbidden; and the strictly pious take no sustenance between the rising and the setting of the

sun; but this latter instance of self-denial is not very common, and, as I understood, is rarely practised, except in the metropolis, where the appearance of sanctity is sometimes assumed as a ladder by which the crafty attempt to climb to promotion. The sovereign himself is a great favourer of the austerities of the Birman religion; and his chief minister, or Woongee, has for many years on a Birman sabbath abstained from food so long as the sun continues above the horizon.

The Birmans are extremely fond both of poetry and music; they call the former Yeddoo: when repeated by a scholar, it flows soft and measured to the ear; it is sometimes in successive, and often in alternate rhimes. A line is called Tageoung; a stanza, Tubbouk. They have epic as well as religious poems of high

celebrity, and they are fond of reciting in heroic numbers the exploits of their kings and generals. I was informed, that the prowess of Alompra is recorded in verses not unworthy of a monarch.

Music is a science which is held in considerable estimation throughout the Birman empire, and is cultivated at the present day more generally than in India, notwithstanding it is there termed, as by the ancient Greeks, the language of the gods. The royal library of Ummerapoora is said to contain many valuable treatises on the art. Some of the professional musicians display considerable skill and execution, and the softer airs are pleasing even to an ear unaccustomed to such melody. The principal instruments are a Soum, or harp, made of light wood, hollowed and varnished, in shape somewhat

like a canoe with a deck; at the extremity a piece of hard wood is neatly fastened, which tapers to the end, and rising curves over the body of the harp; from this curvature, the strings, usually made of wire, are extended to a bridge on the belly of the instrument: there are two sounding holes, one on each side of the bridge. The size of the Soum varies from two to five feet in length.

The Turr resembles our violin; it has only three strings, and is played on with a bow. I at first imagined it had been of European introduction, and brought to Pegue by the Portugueze; but I was assured it was an original instrument of the country.

The Pullaway, is a common flagelet.

The Kyezoup, is a collection of cymbals, which are suspended in a bamboo frame; these cymbals, varying in size, produce modulated gradations of sounds; there were eighteen in the Kyezoup that I saw.

The Patola, or guitar, is a curious instrument; it is the exact form of a crocodile in miniature; the body of which is hollow, with sounding holes on the back; three strings of wire extend from the shoulder to the tail, and are supported on bridges at each extremity; the strings are tuned by means of pegs in the tail, to which they are fastened; it is played on by the finger, and is generally used to accompany the voice.

The Boundaw is a collection of drums, oblong in form, and varying in size, which

are suspended perpendicularly in a wooden frame by leather thongs. The whole machine is about five feet in diameter, and four feet high. The performer stands in the centre, and beats on the drums with a small stick. This instrument is always introduced when there is a full band, and is much used in processions, being carried by two men, whilst the performer shuffles along in the inside, playing as he goes.

The Heem is the pipe of Pan, formed of several reeds neatly joined together, and sounded by a common mouth-piece; when played with skill, it produces a very plaintive melody.

These are the principal instruments of music in use among the Birmans. Dr. Buchanan purchased a complete concert

set, for fifty-four tackal, which is about five or six guineas. Melody has charms for all mankind: among the boatmen that rowed my barge, I doubt whether there was one who did not possess an instrument of some sort; he who could procure no better, had what we call a Jew's harp, with which he delighted to beguile half an hour of a cool evening, after a day of hard labour under a burning sun.

Of the ancient Pallis,* whose language

* In Captain Wilford's elaborate and learned Dissertation on Egypt and the Nile, from the ancient books of the Hindoos, there is the following passage:

"The history of the Pallis cannot fail to be interesting, especially as it will be found much connected with that of Europe; and I hope soon to be supplied with materials for a full account of them. Even their miserable remains in India must excite compassion, when we consider how great they once were, and from what height they fell, through the intolerant zeal and superstition of their neighbours. Their

constitutes at the present day the sacred text of Ava, Pegue, and Siam, as well as of several other countries eastward of the Ganges; and of their migration from India to the banks of the Cali, the Nile of Ethiopia, we have but very imperfect information. As a nation, they have long ago ceased to exist: they are said to have possessed, in former times, a dominion stretching from the Indus as far as Siam, and to have been conquered by the Rajaputras, who changed the name of their country from Palisthan to Rajaputra. In the old books of the Hindoos they are called Paliputras, and it may I think be concluded that they were the Palibothri of the ancients.

" features are peculiar, and their language different, " but perhaps not radically, from that of the other " Hindoos. Their villages are still called Palli." *Asiat. Research. Vol. III.*

It has been the opinion of some of the most enlightened writers* on the languages of the East, that the Pali, the sacred language of the priests of Boodh, is nearly allied to the Shanscrit of the Bramins; and there certainly is much of that holy idiom engrafted on the vulgar language of Ava, by the introduction of the Hindoo religion. The character in common use throughout Ava and Pegue is a round Nagari, derived from the square Pali, or religious text; it is formed of circles and segments of circles, variously disposed and combined, whilst the Pali, which is solely applied to the purposes of religion, is a square letter, chiefly consisting of right angles.

* Captain Wilford on Egypt and the Nile. Loubere's Account of Siam. Chambers on the Ruins of Mavalipuram. *Asiat. Research. Vol. I.*

The Birman language contains thirty-three simple sounds, to represent which, their alphabet, commonly called Kagye Kague, consists of an equal number of distinct characters, exclusive of various marks and contractions, that supply the place of long and short vowels, diphthongs, &c. These are explained and enumerated in separate series, in the Birman Spelling-book, entitled, Kaynboungie, in which every possible combination is given and exemplified.

It should be observed here, that there is no representation of the vowel corresponding with our short *ă*, as from the frequent occurrence of that sound in the middle and at the end of words, it was found convenient to omit it in writing; it is nevertheless to be pronounced after every simple sound or consonant not sup-

plied with another vowel, unless it be forbidden by a mark of elision placed over the letter, or excluded by the junction of two or more consonants, in the form of a compound character. These singularities, I am informed by Mr. Wilkins, are common to all the alphabets of the Hindoo class.

The Birmans write from left to right, and though they leave no distinguishing space between their words, they mark the pauses of a sentence and the full stops. Their letters are distinct, and their manuscripts are in general very beautiful.

The common books of the Birmans, like those of the Hindoos, particularly of such as inhabit the southern parts of India, are composed of the palmyra leaf, on which the letters are engraved with a

stylus; but the Birmans far excel the Braminical Hindoos in the neatness of the execution, and in the ornamental part of their volumes. In every Kioum, or monastery, there is a library or repository of books, usually kept in lacquered chests. Books in the Pali text, are sometimes composed of thin stripes of bamboo, delicately plaited, and varnished over in such a manner as to form a smooth and hard surface upon a leaf of any dimensions; this surface is afterwards gilded, and the sacred letters are traced upon it in black and shining japan. The margin is illumined by wreaths and figures of gold, on a red, green, or black ground.

In the recitation of poetry, the language is exceedingly melodious; even the prose of common conversation appears to be measured, and the concluding word

of each sentence is lengthened by a musical cadence, that marks the period to the ear of a person wholly unacquainted with the meaning.

The annexed Plate exhibits the simple elementary characters, with the sound that each expresses, and the name in the Birman tongue: this name has an appropriate meaning, such as "great ka," "spiral ka," "circular za," &c. but some of these characters are very rarely used, such as No. 4, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 23, and 32.

To this alphabet is added the Shanscrit elementary character, analogous to each of the Birman characters; also the Birman cyphers, and a specimen of the ancient Pali, taken from a very beautiful manuscript in my possession, which con-

tains an account of the ceremony used in the consecration of Rhahaans *.

It is difficult to ascertain with precision the exact limits of the Birman empire. Dr. Buchanan, who accompanied me, sought for geographical information with the most diligent inquiry; he procured, but not without considerable trouble and expence, sketches of every part of the Birman territories; and he has transmitted the materials which he thus collected to the East-India Company. Those sketches, however, being contained in various and detached pieces, not forming any connected body, nor yet reduced to a graduated scale, can hardly be brought into the shape of a regular map without the aid of some further communications; they

* I am indebted for the Shanscrit character, to the kindness of my friend Mr. Wilkins.

are nevertheless documents of much intrinsic value and importance; it is therefore to be hoped that, with the aid of some additional lights, a vacuum on the terrestrial globe will, ere long, be filled up, and a portion of the earth delineated, which heretofore has been very imperfectly known. On a probable calculation from Dr. Buchanan's papers of the extent of the present Birman empire, it appears to include the space between the 9th and 26th degrees of north latitude, and between the 92d and 107th degrees of longitude east of Greenwich, about 1050 geographical miles in length, and 600 in breadth: these are the ascertainable limits, taken from the Birman accounts; but it is probable that their dominions stretch still farther to the north. It should, however, be remarked, that the breadth often varies, and is in many places very incon-

siderable, on what is called the Eastern Peninsula.

Dr. Buchanan, in the summary* or general outline of the geographical materials which he collected, thus expresses himself on the subject of rivers:—It appears, "that the Arracan river is not so "considerable as has been supposed, but "takes its rise in hills at no great distance "to the north.

"That the river coming from Thibet, "which is supposed to be that of Arra-"can, is in fact the Keenduem, or the "great western branch of the Ava river.

"That what is supposed to be the "western branch of the Irrawaddy, is in

* Extract from the Bengal Political Letter, 11th of September, 1797.

" fact the eastern one, which passes by " Ava, and runs to the north, keeping " west from the province of Yunan, and " leaving between it and that part of China " a country subject to the Birmans.

" That the Loukiang, which is supposed " to be the great branch of the Irra- " waddy, has no communication with " that river; but on entering the Birman " dominions assumes the name of Tha- " luayn, or Thanluayn, and falls into the " sea at Martaban.

" That the river of Pegue, which is " supposed to come from China, rises " among hills about 100 miles from the " sea, and which form the boundary be- " tween the Birman and Pegue kingdoms.

" That between the Pegue and Marta-

" ban rivers there is a lake, from which
" two rivers proceed; the one runs north
" to Old Ava, where it joins the My-
" oungnya, or Little River of Ava, which
" comes from mountains on the frontiers
" of China; the other river runs south
" from the lake to the sea, and is the
" Sitang river in the map.

" That the rivers of China, which are
" supposed to be the heads of the Pegue
" river, are those of the river of Siam.

" That the rivers of Siam and Cambodia
" communicate by a very considerable
" branch, called the Annan."

This disposition of the rivers gives an entire new face to the geography of India extra Gangem; and from the diligence

and ability with which Dr. Buchanan collated the several accounts that he received, I am inclined to believe that his statement is nearly correct.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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